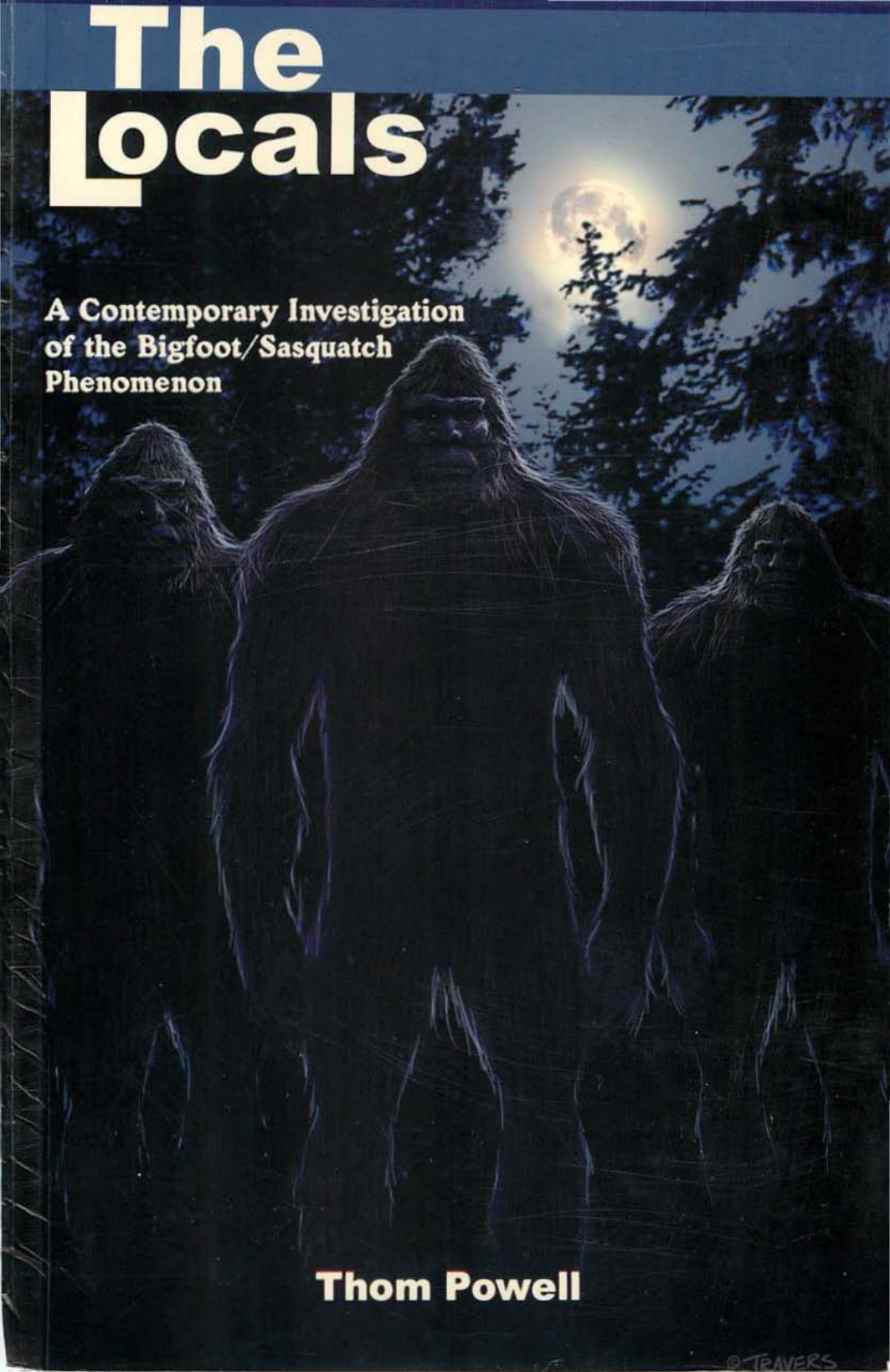
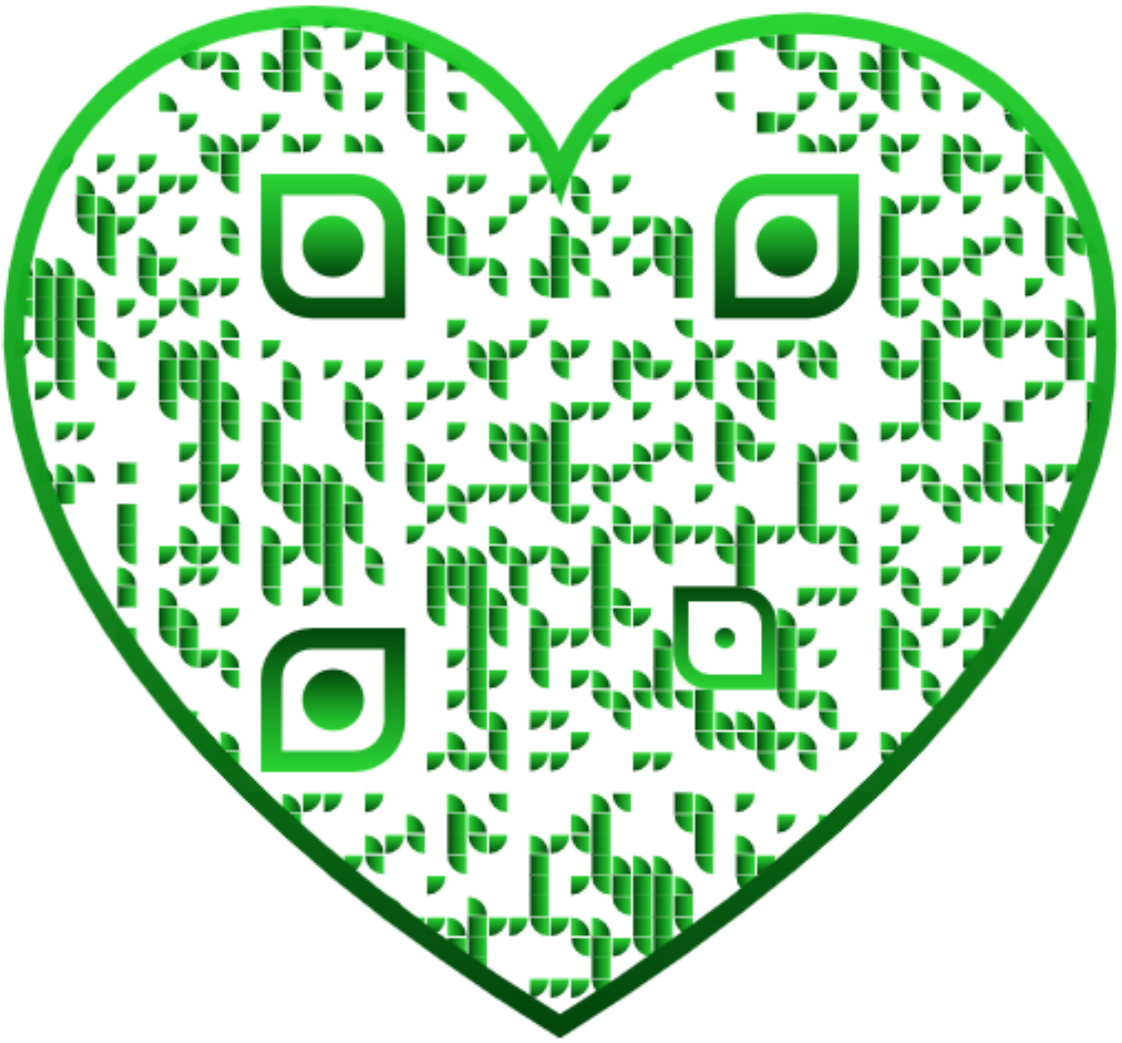
The Locals



A Contemporary Investigation of the Bigfoot/Sasquatch Phenomenon

Thom Powell



The Locals

A Contemporary Investigation of The Bigfoot/Sasquatch Phenomenon

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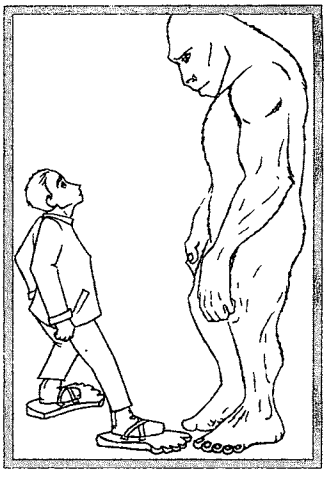
Introduction

The Death of Bigfoot



"Bigfoot is dead. Really." proclaimed a tabloid-style treatment that appeared in the December 9, 2002 edition of The Seattle Times. Actually, that's not even close to the truth. The truth is Bigfoot never existed in the first place. There is no ape-like apparition named "Bigfoot" that travels the continent, leaving huge footprints for us to find.

By capitalizing the term "Bigfoot," journalists transform the possible into the impossible. The word "Bigfoot" becomes a proper noun, not a common noun, and therefore the name of an individual creature. Incorrect capitalization of the noun "bigfoot" leads us to assume that Bigfoot is an individual, not a member of a larger population.

With one incorrect keystroke then, we imply that all sightings and track finds continent-wide are the work of a single, rather busy and well-traveled creature whom the tabloids call "Bigfoot" and who, like Elvis, pops up in some pretty strange places. An instant impossibility.

There may be a few very good reasons why we prefer not to take the bigfoot phenomenon very seriously. Not only is the concept of a larger-than-life primate in our own backyard a little spooky, but it is also irresistibly funny. They're big, they're ugly, and they're said to smell terrible. Their feet are so big that they are quite literally named after their big feet. With that kind of humor potential built right into the subject, it seems a shame not to use it. And if we didn't exploit every opportunity to make a joke of the subject, it would quite possibly scare the hell out of us.

It is the intention of this book to give serious consideration to the bigfoot phenomenon, so it is necessary to first state quite directly that there is no individual animal responsible for all sightings and

track finds across the continent. There is, however, considerable evidence to support the position that a population of seldom seen primates does indeed inhabit the forests and other "uninhabited" regions of the North American continent. They are very rare, they are very shy, and presumably very clever, but careful scientific investigation of the sighting information, the track-finds, and the other lines of evidence clearly indicate that bigfoots do inhabit some of the places where we humans seldom, if ever, go.

The bigfoot topic is filled with persistent but faulty assumptions, and one of them is the belief that no experienced outdoors people or scientists take bigfoots seriously. Far from it, the years I have spent personally researching the subject has opened my eyes to the fact that there are very many outdoorsmen and even some scientists who take the subject quite seriously. They know that real evidence abounds. They're just not talking about it too often or too loudly, because they know full well that guffaws and ridicule is the way most of us fend off any serious consideration of such a spooky idea.

This book is not about Bigfoot. It is about bigfoots. It is the summary of many years of research in the library, in the wilderness, in the swamps, in the laboratory, and at the kitchen tables of eyewitnesses. I have never personally seen a bigfoot, but I have interviewed hundreds of people who have. I have read the chronicles of thousands more who have submitted their accounts along with personal contact information to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization website. I was a curator of this organization, which is the world's largest organization that objectively investigates the "Bigfoot Phenomenon."

The fact that such creatures could live, feed, and reproduce on the margins of human habitation is a very hard thing for most of us to accept. The astounding capabilities these beings possess is the far stranger story. My research has led me to the realization that these creatures have some truly remarkable capabilities. That's what this book is about. To a lesser extent, this book explores the debate that rages among bigfoot researchers as to what is the exact nature of these enigmatic beings.

Every Native American tribe has a name for these creatures that were mysterious but well known to them. The Salish people of the Pacific Northwest coast used the term "sesquac," which has been anglicized into the familiar "sasquatch." Even this more dignified term is incorrectly and invariably capitalized, though I will avoid per-

petuating that error. Unfortunately, it is a more cumbersome term than the undeniably handy and vivid term "bigfoot," which was first coined by bulldozer operator Jerry Crew, his boss Ray Wallace, and other members of a northern California road-building crew. The first known printed mention of "Bigfoot" was a 1958 story in the Humboldt Times that described Jerry Crew's track finds at that time. The story was picked up by wire services and republished in the San Francisco Examiner and elsewhere. It was then and there that the name "Bigfoot" first took hold and it was actually in reference to a single creature that Crew and Wallace were tracking. It was acceptable for them to coin the name "Bigfoot," for the men were tracking an individual creature that they had named. Only when that name, complete with a "capital B", got attached to other sightings and track finds in other places did a linguistic error take hold. Like vampire bats and flying saucers, it became a label that has misled and mischaracterized a subject ever since.

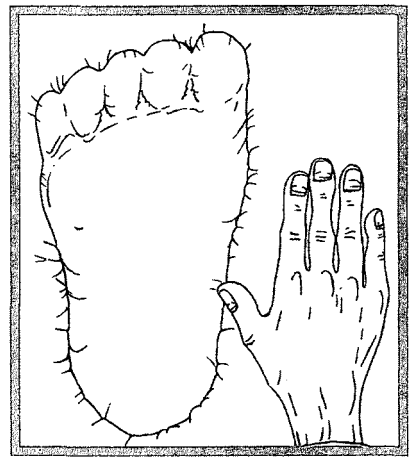
So, in deference to these noble lords of the woods, I shall vary the terms I use to refer to them, but always using the grammatically correct lower case. However small their population may be, they are not any different than the bear, deer, raccoons, or humans that inhabit the landscape. Describing them correctly may help earn more credibility for these creatures and for the study of their existence and lifestyle. Perhaps along the way, a term will find favor with the readers that will eventually supplant the insulting and rather silly name, "bigfoot."

I have come to think of them as "the locals." They have long been a part of the landscape that we have recently adopted for our human purposes. Like the Native Americans, they were here before we arrived. Unlike the Native Americans, we have not succeeded in evicting them. They do not fear us; in fact, they observe our human activities with great interest. They stay in the shadows most of the time, though they occasionally manifest themselves. When they do, a few people notice. Most do not.

It was almost twenty years ago when I began to notice that something was going on. The more I noticed, the more I was astounded by what I was seeing. I gradually became aware of the fact that a race of primate beings with remarkable powers was operating right under our noses. This book is about the locals, and the human witnesses who made me aware of their remarkable capabilities.

chapter one

Bigfoot Science



"Occam's Razor" is a scientific principle used to resolve confusing data and competing interpretations of that data. When several possible explanations might explain some puzzling data, Occam's Razor instructs the scientist to look first and look hardest at the simplest of the several possible explanations.

When trying to resolve the bigfoot phenomenon, several explanations might be used to explain the fact that thousands of eyewitnesses have claimed to see bigfoot-like creatures. The explanations include mass hallucination by eyewitnesses, widespread and sophisticated hoaxing, widespread bald-face lying, and a population of flat-faced bears that run around on two long legs. All of these explanations become more complicated to resolve and more improbable than the much simpler possibility that there is a population of bigfoot animals that have been somehow scientifically overlooked.

If sightings reports are not indications of real creatures, then all of the people who claim them are mistaken, utterly delusional, or lying. If we were dealing with a witness pool in the dozens or hundreds, then one of these three possibilities would seem most likely. But when the pool of witnesses numbers in the thousands or even tens of thousands, then truthfulness becomes the simplest possibility. The other scenarios become absurdly improbable, particularly when the time is taken to thoroughly investigate the individual reports.

The bigfoot phenomenon is not taken seriously by most people because it lacks the endorsement of "science." If such creatures really existed, it is argued, scientists would know it and they would have told us, because it is their job to do so. The general feeling seems to be that scientists who study stuff like bigfoot, whoever they are, would have proven their existence by now.

Who are the bigfoot scientists? Is there even such a thing as bigfoot science? There are anthropologists who study human origins. There are primatologists who study apes, monkeys, and other non-human primates. Then there are cryptozoologists who study the possibilities of unclassified creatures throughout the world. Those who study the bigfoot mystery specifically may be most properly known as hominologists and their area of study, hominology. At least, it is more dignified than "bigfoot science," which is seen by most to be a bit of an oxymoron.

The phrase "bigfoot science" is an example of both an oxymoron and ratiocination. Most people think bigfoots are a myth. To put the word "bigfoot" next to "science" is to create an apparent contradiction. It is an oxymoron, like "plastic glasses," "jumbo shrimp," "old news," and "student teacher." Oxymorons are not the contradictions that they appear to be. I was once a student teacher. There are really big shrimp. Not everything we call a glass is made from glass, and some news is no longer new.

When it comes to bigfoot science, it must be noted first that science is really just a means of systematically verifying carefully constructed questions. Science is OK with, or just indifferent to bigfoot, whether they exist or not. It is scientists (the people) who are generally not OK with bigfoot. Scientists have biases and emotions that the scientific method does not. The interesting paradox is that scientists, who are generally seen as objective and impartial, tend to show the same biases as non-scientific folks when it comes to the thorny question of bigfoot. It is fair to say that most scientists have not informed themselves about the bigfoot subject and the evidence that exists to support it. Yet most people who call themselves scientists will confidently state, from a position of no particular knowledge, it is improbable in the extreme that any such creatures could exist. They are usually responding to a preconceived notion that they have gained from seeing tabloid headlines and silly pictures while standing in line at the grocery store. They reason that no subject that is lampooned so regularly in the tabloid media can have any truth behind it.

Since scientists are people, they are capable of the same human foibles as the rest of us when it comes to consideration of the sasquatch. Their considered opinions sometimes contain the same faulty logic and bias as the opinions offered by the general public: there cannot be just one of anything, we would have found bones by

now and, none of the people who claim to have seen "it" are credible. If bigfoot were real, we would know.

Truth be told, scientists in general have not looked into the bigfoot phenomenon because they cannot afford to ruin their careers. To seriously investigate the matter would jeopardize their scientific reputation in the eyes of their peers. Even in the impartial world of science, bigfoot is a pariah that might taint the reputation of any scientist who took on a professional or intellectual interest in the matter.

Science does not worry about its reputation. Scientists care very much about their reputation. Science does not care how it gets paid. Scientists do. And no subject is more likely to invite ridicule from scientific peers and academic colleagues than bigfoot. No subject heaps more embarrassment and jeopardizes funding more completely than an affiliation with bigfoot research. There may be other subjects that are just as bad (Loch Ness Monster and UFOs come to mind), but nothing could be worse. Scientific pursuit of the bigfoot phenomenon is a fast track to professional suicide for aspiring and established scientists alike.

Dr. Grover Krantz, who sadly died in February of 2002, was well aware of the professional penalty for taking bigfoots seriously. He was a career anthropologist and the first scientist to give serious academic consideration to the bigfoot mystery. His willingness to weigh the evidence brought him personal ridicule and loss of promotion at Washington State University. He never discussed it, but he was ostracized by his peers, who seldom bothered to read his published work. Like Galileo, Grover Krantz, Ph.D. brought ratiocination, or carefully reasoned thought, to a subject that was previously dominated by unscientific dogma. And like Galileo, Dr. Krantz's contribution to science was not fully recognized at the time of this death.

Krantz was the first academic to apply ratiocination to the bigfoot enigma. Krantz pioneered the careful study of footprint casts, fossil evidence, and early photographic evidence. He concluded that many track casts are not fakes, and that some recent footprint evidence was a suitable match for fossil jaw and teeth evidence that is 300,000 years old. Krantz concluded that much of the modern bigfoot track evidence is too detailed and anatomically correct to have been faked. Instead, it points to relict populations of *Gigantopithecus blackii*, which is not as extinct as it was thought to be.

I met Dr. Krantz a year before he died and I regret that I never

thanked him for changing my opinion of bigfoot science. I suppose I also owed him an apology, because I probably ridiculed his suggestion that bigfoots existed before I ever actually listened to his informed and precise articulation of the evidence.

In fact, I once used the bigfoot subject in the middle school science classes I teach as an example of the misapplication of science. "Pseudoscience" is the condescending term used by mainstream science to denigrate subject matter that besmirches the good name of science. "Creation science" is another example of a subject that does not qualify as genuine science as much as a misapplication of science. As a science teacher I presented an annual lesson to the eighth graders on how pseudoscience is used to earn serious consideration for flaky pursuits like looking for Atlantis, Noah's Ark, and Bigfoot.

Students always stay more interested in a lesson that is peppered with humor, especially when addressing something as dry as the scientific method. That fact helped elevate the bigfoot subject above the other examples of pseudoscience. Not only does the bigfoot subject possess vast potential for humor, but there was no danger of stepping on the toes of students or parents who might object to making light of a subject they felt strongly about. Bigfoot has no anti-defamation league and bigfoot is about as safe a subject for classroom humor as a teacher could possibly find. So, off I went into my lesson, complete with jokes and anecdotes and logic:

- You can't have just one of a creature.
- It takes two to reproduce and still more to create a viable gene pool.
- All it takes is plywood and a jigsaw to create big, barefoot tracks.
- Ape suits rent for forty bucks. Hoaxers have come forward and admitted their pranks.

I was pretty pleased with myself. The kids were interested and they got the message that I wanted them to get: Bigfoot was pseudoscience.

The third year that I ran this lesson I got my hands on a TV documentary about the Bigfoot Phenomenon. The show included a segment with Dr. Grover Krantz. He discussed track anatomy, and fossil jaws from Viet Nam and teeth from China. He attributed these fossil

remains to the supposedly extinct primate species known as *Gigantopithecus*.

Dr. Krantz spoke with a scientific precision and an academic background in anthropology. He explained the details of his track casts. A track cast is made by filling the impressions in the ground made by animal footprints with plaster, or plaster like substances such as dental stone or hydrocal-30, both of which are more expensive than plaster but are harder once dry. Krantz explained how casts of bigfoot tracks suggested a foot anatomy that made sense for an animal that was much heavier than we were. A larger footprint from a taller and heavier animal would have a different metatarsal hinge or "ball" of the foot, maybe even two "balls" in the foot just behind the toes. Sure enough, the track cast he had seemed to show two balls in the foot. They also seemed to show a foot that had an ankle that was not in a vertical line with the heel as in our human foot. A much heavier creature would have an ankle that was closer to the center of the foot. The track casts he held seemed to show evidence that they were made by a foot whose ankle was more distant from, and forward of the heel. Krantz also spoke of other characteristics of the track casts that he used to determine their authenticity, though he didn't reveal them in the taped interview.

Years later, I crossed paths with Krantz in January of 2001 during a conference on the Skookum Cast (Chapter 6). I asked him about the characteristics of track casts which he used to separate the genuine ones from the fakes. It turns out that one was the "dermal ridges" or fingerprint-like lines that swirl around the hands and feet of all primates, but which are found only on primates. If the earth or mud that contains a bigfoot track is fine enough, the fingerprint-like dermal ridges will be faithfully preserved in the plaster cast. The dermal ridges will not make tightly curving swirls such as the ones seen on our fingerprints. On tracks that appear to be genuine, the dermal ridges can be expected to make coarse, widely curving patterns that encircle the margins of the entire foot. Then there are the "Krantz Three," which Joe Beelart and Larry Lund found mention of in an old letter that Krantz wrote to Rene Dahinden: A two-section foot, square toes, and a straight line across toe ends. Personally, I do not feel that these three traits are common to all authentic sasquatch tracks but they are interesting observations to bear in mind when inspecting track casts.

Another unique characteristic is even more difficult to distinguish without a hand lens. Tiny dots in the plaster are indication of perspiration pores on the skin of the foot. These skin pores allow the foot to breathe and perspire. These skin pores are found only on primates such as apes, monkeys, humans, and bigfoots. They are also very tough, maybe even impossible, to fake in a convincing manner.

Krantz's contribution to the bigfoot documentary certainly gave me pause. For the first time, I was seriously considering the possibility that such creatures really might exist. His reasoning was sound and his logic was persuasively simple: An animal that is certain to exist in the recent fossil record and thought to be extinct, may not be extinct at all. It would not be the first time that a supposedly extinct animal was still around. The coelacanth, a fossil fish from Mesozoic time has been caught by fishermen in two oceans while scientists assumed the creature to be long gone.

That was the last time I presented the bigfoot lesson as pseudoscience. I wasn't yet to the point of being convinced that the creatures still existed but I was at the point of re-evaluating my dogma that bigfoot was the stuff of pseudoscience. Krantz had given the subject a certain credibility that I had not previously been aware of. I was not about to abandon bigfoot as a science lesson, but it was a turning point. In future years I used the bigfoot lesson to emphasize scientific mysteries and the scientific method, but not pseudoscience. I featured the bigfoot phenomenon as an example of those things that science has yet to get a handle on; things that seem to have an intriguingly strong possibility about them despite the fact that absolutely nothing about the matter has been scientifically nailed down. That cherished institution called science that we rely on so heavily to keep us informed about our world still had some work to do.

On the one hand it could be argued that scientists already have proven bigfoots exist. On the other hand it could also be said that they have not come close, and they possibly never will. It is this kind of contradiction that seems to define the bigfoot phenomenon over and over again. These contradictions also make the subject fascinating to those with the interest in considering the pros and cons of a fairly complicated issue.

To take the first position, the work of career anthropologist Grover Krantz has brought to the surface aspects of track casts and the fossil record that are difficult and maybe impossible to completely refute.

His lines of evidence are pretty good, but not good enough to satisfy most zoologists that a primate species that is larger than *Homo sapiens* (humans) exists in North America, or anywhere else. Part of the problem is that such a claim is so extraordinary.

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," was the phrase invoked by astronomer Carl Sagan when appraising the quality of the best evidence for UFOs. The same can be said for why the physical evidence and thousands of eyewitness accounts are not seen as sufficient to prove that sasquatches roam the North American forests.

Science, per se, is not where the roadblock lays, for science is really a process, not an institution. The scientific process, or the scientific method, is just a way of attacking a question by experimentation so that an irrefutable answer is achieved.

The Six Steps of the Scientific Method

1. Identify specific questions related to the problem at hand.
2. Propose an answer to one of these questions in the form of an educated guess.
3. Formulate a hypothesis; stating the educated guess in such a way that it can be tested.
4. Predict the outcome of the test in the event that the hypothesis is correct.
5. Test the hypothesis by analysis or experimentation to see if the hypothesis is correct.
6. Reject or revise the hypothesis if the experiment does not support it.

Every experiment that is truly scientific does not require a design that precisely adheres to these six steps. It may incorporate these steps into a single avenue of inquiry, but the principles implied by these steps are always identifiable. The most important aspect of a scientific inquiry may be that only one variable may be tested at a time, and all other variables that might affect the outcome of the experiment must somehow be "controlled." Failure to truly isolate the variable being tested from all other variables may be the biggest difficulty when designing a scientific inquiry.

Experiments with animals are more challenging because it is so

difficult to control the variables which include health, disposition, and genetic variation. These variables are factored out by employing very large populations of experimental subjects. This enables the researcher to reduce the influence of individual differences on the outcome of the experiment. Humans are even more difficult to experiment with since there are far more environmental influences that must be accommodated. The subjects cannot be kept in cages that are closely supervised. Genetic variation and the psychological mindset of humans make for even greater variability. Again, statistics is often the answer to these problems and experiments must sample larger populations in order for the statistics to generate reliable answers.

It's a wonder science is ever able to prove anything when all of the possible variables are taken into account. Truth be told, science cannot really prove things very often. Experiments generally produce evidence, but seldom, if ever, do they generate proof. Proof is a very elusive concept in science and it may only come when an experiment is successfully repeated many times by different researchers, using the identical methodology, and yielding identical results. This important hurdle, known as *replication*, generally takes many years and many researchers to successfully accomplish. Most experiments with interesting implications get publicized well before this essential hurdle has been cleared, so the public is often misled as to the reliability of a scientific result when it is based on the conclusions of a single experiment, no matter how well the experiment was designed and conducted.

Everyone likes to be proven right and scientists are no exception, but an experiment that invalidates a hypothesis is hardly unsuccessful. In fact, good scientists actively pursue evidence that refutes their own hypothesis. One way to do this is by constructing a null hypothesis, as well as a working hypothesis, when designing the investigation. The null hypothesis is the opposite of the hypothesis. It is constructed so that if it is found to be true, the opposing hypothesis must be false. This approach encourages the scientist to avoid favoring one hypothesis when evaluating the results of an experiment. This is particularly necessary when the results being gathered are not completely objective.

And if the general population has trouble making the distinction between a hypothesis and a theory, then the statistical construct known as the "null hypothesis" is even more hopeless to understand.

A null hypothesis is a carefully worded statement that represents the diametric opposite of an experimental hypothesis. A null hypothesis might be developed so that it can be validated or refuted with statistics more easily than the hypothesis itself. But to refute the null hypothesis is to confirm the hypothesis and vice versa. Disproving the null hypothesis is one path to confirming the hypothesis of an experiment.

The null hypothesis helps to underscore in the mind of the researcher the need to keep an impartial mindset when analyzing experimental results. Veteran researchers can fall victim to the error of being overly committed to confirmation of the experimental hypothesis. One must be willing to discard the hypothesis when the data invalidates it. Lacking the data to invalidate the null hypothesis is often the reason why a hypothesis must be rejected.

Conducting a scientific investigation that adheres to these stringent standards may seem like a rigid and uncreative process. Once the experiment is properly designed, perhaps the execution of the research is tedious, rigorous, and conventional. But one aspect of scientific inquiry still leaves room for enormously creative and unconventional thinking. The most creative aspect of the scientific process is the development of the experimental hypothesis and the means to test it.

This is pretty good news for an unconventional soul who might wish to conduct a scientific inquiry of the bigfoot phenomenon. The evidence is much better than most people realize, although it is not good enough to seal the deal. Despite the fact that science is not impressed with the quality of bigfoot evidence collected to date, a person who has taken a careful look at it and who is willing to develop a hunch on that basis might easily come to the conclusion that some serious experimentation is warranted.

At present, the available evidence that supports the hypothesis that bigfoots exist is not persuasive. It is not as weak as most people believe it is, but it is definitely not persuasive either. There are many eyewitness accounts, which are known in scientific circles as "anecdotal data." Of all the types of data that are considered in science, anecdotal data is considered the most unreliable kind of data, and may not even be worthy of the term "data" at all. Such data might be more properly described as "stories." They are utterly unverifiable, subjective, and therefore prone to inaccuracy for many reasons, despite their

surprising consistency. There are thousands of bigfoot sightings that originate from reputable and careful observers. If they were witnesses to a crime instead of bigfoot activity, such testimony would be admissible in a court of law, even when the defendant's life hangs in the balance. Yet, such accounts are utterly inadmissible when science sits in judgment. In fact, a case has been made that there is so much secondary or anecdotal bigfoot evidence that if a bigfoot were being tried for a capital crime, he would get the electric chair.

Yes, there is a lot of evidence that bigfoots exist. More than most people realize, though most of it is anecdotal. Someone claims to have seen something, but they have nothing tangible to back up their story. Science works differently than law, and science has no use for unsubstantiated testimony of such extraordinary events.

Of all the evidence that is not anecdotal, footprint evidence may be the best of all. Footprints are the namesake of these creatures in the US, but the plaster castings made from them are of debatable scientific value. "Track cast" is the proper term for plaster forms made from the footprint impressions. The evidentiary value of track casts, as with most bigfoot evidence, is better than most people realize, despite the fact that they are not taken seriously by most scientists. They are seen as easy to fake and since acknowledged footprint hoaxes have occurred, the whole line of evidence has become unfairly tainted. This has effectively overshadowed the important but subtle feature found on genuine track casts.

In the late fifties, track casts were the first evidence presented to the media that supported the bigfoot hypothesis. The general public assumes that such evidence was hoaxed and while it is indeed easy to cut out a piece of plywood into the shape of a foot and leave foot-shaped impressions in the ground for folks to find, it is not a simple matter at all to create footprints that contain the details that would fool an experienced eye. Footprint faking may occur but it does not account for most of the footprint evidence that exists. Faked footprints are, as it turns out, quite easy to identify.

Most sasquatch footprints are found in such remote places and under such accidental circumstances that hoaxing becomes very unlikely. A string of dozens or hundreds of tracks, with enormous strides between them (say 46 to 54 inches apart), found in a remote area, and in deep snow would require a huge investment of time and expense to fake, all with no assurance whatsoever that the phony

tracks would be found before weather forces swept them away. I have seen such "track finds" in the Table Rock Wilderness in Oregon. Hunters, cross-country skiers, and other chance visitors to remote places find them occasionally. Tracks are sometimes seen nearer to farms and ranches in rural locations.

Further, track finds in remote places sometimes suggest complex creature behaviors. Researchers Joe Beelart and Cliff Olson have found hundreds of tracks in the snow on Whalehead Ridge above the Fish Creek drainage. The configuration of tracks suggests that the creature approached a panoramic vantage point where it stood and looked toward the distant lights of Portland, Oregon. Tracks found by Joe near Indian Henry seem to suggest a larger creature and a juvenile stopping by a road and checking for traffic before crossing the road.

Track finds seldom get publicity these days. Recently I received photographs of tracks in the snow that were found deep in the Ruckel Creek drainage near Cascade Locks, Oregon. They were sent to me by Fred Bauer, another reliable field man. They appeared to be authentic, but as is the case with virtually all track finds, the evidence never got publicized.

One problem with footprints is that they are generally assumed to be the product of hoaxes staged for the sake of publicity or practical joking. This is probably a bad assumption. The fact that they are obliterated by weather so quickly makes discovery, much less publicity of someone's carefully crafted fakes highly unlikely. In ten years of following up on reports, I have seen several sets of probable sasquatch footprints that looked quite authentic. They never received publicity, so if they were planted as a joke, someone was disappointed. Tracks are usually too indistinct to justify casting in plaster, and are therefore seldom saved. Photos are good only for making comparisons but do nothing to verify the authenticity of set of tracks.

Among bigfoot researchers, the biggest question may be why tracks are not found more often. Track finds are uncommon even in areas where repeated sightings occur. One reason why tracks are so rare is well understood only by those who have looked for them. Most folks assume that the woods are brimming with animal tracks when the fact is that forested areas have very few patches of bare earth where good tracks might be found. Tracks left in leaf litter, fallen twigs, and the low plants that cover most of the forest floor are not

only vague and indistinct, but also a complete waste of time to try to cast in plaster.

Tracks in snow are very tricky to cast and attempts usually fail. They generally yield little or no detail when they are successfully cast. A wax in aerosol form, known as track wax, must first be sprayed into a snow track. Several thin layers are applied and when that is dry, the track can be cast with plaster. Plaster does not dry. It cures. Plaster curing is an exothermic reaction, meaning excess heat is generated in the curing process. Without a thick layer of track wax to hold the shape of the track, the snow would melt before the plaster was hardened, and the track would be misshapen. Plaster takes a long time to cure in the snow, and most try to remove the cast before it is sufficiently cured. The track cast crumbles and the effort is wasted. It is best to dig out a track and lift it from beneath, but patience is more than a virtue when casting tracks, it is a necessity.

Trails are too compacted to yield any wildlife tracks, save for the sharp edged hoof prints of deer or elk. Even then, it is rare that a continuous set of tracks is found. Creek beds and riverbanks seem to offer some of the best places to find any kind of wildlife footprints that are worthy of casting. These places frequently contain finely textured soils and the periods of high water keep the ground relatively free of plants and leaf litter. Road cuts, landslides, and other disturbed areas are areas of promise for finding footprints. But the tracks of bear, big cats, and other majestic wildlife are so seldom seen in these places that it is clear to experienced trackers that such noble animals likely avoid leaving obvious tracks.

Bear researchers generally acknowledge that bear are clever enough to avoid obvious tracks that reveal not just the bear's presence, but their direction of travel, numbers, overall condition, and more. Grizzly bears and wolves have recently reestablished themselves in states like Idaho and Colorado but their presence and their numbers are a matter of some dispute. It is clear to experienced trackers like Doug Peacock that the new arrivals have learned that their chances of survival are enhanced by keeping their whereabouts concealed to a greater degree than they ever did before. They operate exclusively at night, they do not venture far from their hideouts, and they avoid leaving tracks that reveal their whereabouts and travel routes. It has become clear to veteran bigfoot researchers that the same is true for bigfoots. If bears are clever enough to conceal their whereabouts by

taking care not to leave obvious tracks, the same ought to be true for still smarter creatures such as bigfoots.

In light of the behaviors of other savvy forest dwellers, it should be more understandable that a creature as impressive as a bigfoot could exist but leave few tracks, and it may be a wonder that we find as many tracks as we do. At least it should be clearer why good footprints are rare, and highly detailed track casts are then rarer still.

When good track casts do surface, it is easy to separate the hoaxes from the real ones. Thanks to the work of Grover Krantz and others, the details of track casts have been studied to the point where it is no longer difficult to separate genuine track casts from bogus ones. Some of the most recent contributions to the study of bigfoot track casts have been made by a fingerprint expert from Texas. James Chilcutt is one of the leading experts on fingerprint analysis in the world today. His expertise is, of course, used by law enforcement agencies but he has recently been provided with track casts to analyze from the collection of Dr. Jeff Meldrum, a biologist from Idaho State University who is the most academically credentialed of current bigfoot researchers.

Examining Meldrum's collection of track casts, Chilcutt has found dermatoglyphs (dermal ridges and skin pores) that are distinct from all other primates, including humans. Not all track casts are taken from soil or mud that is fine enough to preserve these details, in fact very few are. But when tracks are found and cast that show fine detail, Chilcutt has found that the dermatoglyphs are so unique and so detailed that it seems impossible to fake them. The dermal ridges are too widely spaced to be human and also too fine and too consistent to be faked. The dermal ridges tend to encircle the margins of the foot in much wider, coarser patterns of ridges than would be found on human fingers or feet. No other primate foot or hand shows this same pattern and only primates have dermal ridges on the hands and feet.

Footprint evidence is now indisputable in the view of at least some of the scientists who have bothered to study the evidence carefully. Jimmy Chilcutt, for one, has publicly staked his reputation on the fact that the track casts he has examined point to the existence of an unknown primate. Dr. Meldrum has made it his goal to introduce this incontrovertible evidence into scientific, peer-reviewed journals. This is an important step in the process of gaining credibility for any new scientific accomplishment.

If Chilcutt is the premiere fingerprint analyst, Dr. Henner Fahrenbach may be the premier opinion on the analysis of possible sasquatch hair. Folks who find some suspicious hair in connection with a bigfoot sighting will find through most bigfoot websites that Fahrenbach is the best bet for identification of the unknown hairs, no matter what the hair's origin. Fahrenbach keeps an extensive reference collection of mammalian hair on hand, and Fahrenbach knows hair well enough that he can easily separate the possible sasquatch hair from the unlikely ones. Unfortunately, as with science in general, there is always a frustrating element of uncertainty.

The last time I asked him, Dr. Fahrenbach told me he had acquired fifteen separate samples from four states that he considered to be good candidates for genuine sasquatch hair. By now, I am sure he has more. All had the same visual characteristics, or morphology, under 1000x magnification, though they differed in length and color. All of these 15 hairs were found as single hairs or in very small batches. This is consistent with how primate hairs are replaced. Big swatches of hair invariably are from bears or other animals. The hair samples that Fahrenbach considers genuine came from oddly twisted trees, nesting sites, foot and body prints, and trees at which a sasquatch had been seen to be leaning against.

The possible bigfoot hair Fahrenbach has acquired range from 4 inches to 15 inches, from root to tip. Interestingly, the tip is worn, rounded, or displaying the familiar human condition known as "split ends." The hair root, or follicle, is generally small, also like a human one.

Fahrenbach's measurement of hair diameter ranges from about 45 microns to 85 microns. This makes the suspect hairs thicker than the very fine hairs that comprise the undercoat of most mammals. Undercoat hairs can be identified not only by their very small diameters, but also by the central hollow core, or medulla, which in the case of undercoat hairs, looks more like a string of pearls than the continuous hollow shaft that comprises the medulla of most other hair. Hair over 100μm is considered to be other species though Dr. Fahrenbach acknowledges that in humans, hair diameter varies, depending on what part of the body the hair came from.

Perhaps the most important criterion of all that visually distinguished suspected sasquatch hairs from all others is the fact that the medulla is almost totally absent. In a few hairs he sees some short seg-

ments of fragmentary medulla, which is typical of human hair as well. Bovine (cow) hair can sometimes lack a medulla, but cow hair shows coarse pigmentation granules that are arranged like stacks of Lifesaver candies around the periphery of the hair shaft. Black bovine hair is opaque, which has not been seen in possible sasquatch hairs. Regardless of how they look to the eye, bigfoot hairs always show a reddish-brown appearance under high-power magnification.

An interesting thing about the lack of medulla is that this condition also is seen in some blonde human hair. And without a medulla, neither blonde human hair, nor sasquatch hair yields any useable DNA for analysis.

With all the attention that DNA gets in crime scene investigation, it generally surprises folks to hear that hair does not generate complete sequences of DNA. It may seem to the bigfoot skeptic as a bit too convenient that the supposed bigfoot hairs do not generate DNA, and that they bear a striking similarity to human hairs. When trying to distinguish sasquatch hair from human hair, Fahrenbach has found these differences:

1. Human hair of a 4" length always has a cut end unless it originates from the head of an infant who has not yet had a first haircut. The possible sasquatch hair always has native terminations (uncut ends that are worn, rounded, or split.)

2. Bigfoot hair, whether a straight or wavy shaft, has the same round to oval cross-section for its entire length, and has no color banding. Shorter hairs are likely to have some taper toward the tip.

3. Color of suspected sasquatch hair, when viewed under the microscope, always includes a red tinge plus a variable amount of very fine pigmentation (melanin) granules. No matter whether the hair looks black, brown or red to the naked eye, it shows the reddish tinge under high magnification.

The most curious item of all may be the degree to which sasquatch hair resembles human hairs, on both a macroscopic and a microscopic level. Except for the reddish tinge and no sign of ever having been cut, the sasquatch hairs have the same diameters and the same end features like split ends. On a microscopic level, the

cuticle, which is not even discernible using a good light microscope but which is very discernible using a scanning electron microscope, is identical to human cuticles. And at a molecular level, it appears that DNA analysis is futile, since the mtDNA (mitochondrial DNA) appears too fragmented to allow for sequencing, as is the case in blonde human hairs.

Naturally, a skeptic would argue that this suggests that human hairs are being collected in the field and being labeled as sasquatch hairs in the laboratory. Knowing some of the sources of Fahrenbach's hair samples as I do, I also know that there is more to it than that. Even though the hair evidence must be considered circumstantial, the circumstances surrounding the collection of the hairs in Fahrenbach's collection are generally quite impressive. Usually there was an eyeball sighting of one of these creatures interacting with the tree or fence that later yielded the suspected hair. Dr. Fahrenbach is a very thorough researcher and his documentation of the sources of the hair is quite good.

Fahrenbach own words serve to summarize the situation nicely:

> To help with field identification, look for the following: The hair has no medulla; it seems to have always a reddish cast under the microscope, even if it looks very dark in the hand; its contained pigment is very fine grained; its diameter falls in the range of 50-90 microns; it is essentially indistinguishable from human hair (however, I have 15 separate samples with these characteristics, a quantity unlikely to have been collected by pure chance from human sources). A fat cellular medulla with blocky cells is most likely bear. Ungulate have hair that looks like Styrofoam. Rodent hairs are very fine and have a bead-like medulla. Bovine hair can be confusing as it sometimes has no medulla, but it has coarse pigment in lozenge-shaped masses in the cortex. Forensic hair analysis is always based on A/B comparison, which is something we cannot do for obvious reasons. But I am trying to get close by the statistics inherent in the collection of an increasingly sizable set of hair samples, whose congruity becomes less likely to be due to chance.

The possibility of DNA extraction from hair is something that most

people expect to yield the definitive evidence if bigfoots really exist. On the matter of DNA, Dr. Fahrenbach comments,

> "DNA extracted from hair shaft or roots (hair demonstrably fresh) was too fragmented to permit gene sequencing. That characteristic is sometimes found in human hair that lacks the medulla (as does sasquatch hair - at least what I am willing to identify as such). I am concentrating now on blood or tissue, as the hair holds no promise. Feces do so even less, since the DNA collecting has to be done while they are practically steaming fresh and it is improbable in the extreme that anybody with the fecal DNA expertise would stumble onto a fresh sasquatch turd! By the way, contrary to popular opinion, I have not encountered any deliberate effort to produce a hoax, even with the much decried case of hair from Paul Freeman, whose fiber sample was pronounced to be "unusual" hair by a prominent cosmetics lab! The same man-made fibers have been found elsewhere in the mountains by others and may be an environmental contaminant."
>
> -Dr. W. H. Fahrenbach

The sensitivity of DNA detection has tremendously improved lately and just as important, the experience and skill of the people who do this work has also improved tremendously. Consequently, it is fairly easy to rule out familiar animals when analyzing the DNA contained in a tuft of hair or a spot of blood. Fresh samples do work much better than the old ones but the levels of detection sensitivity have improved so much lately that the difference is not as important as it used to be.

The actual test is not too tough to understand. If the hair sample includes a root cell or follicle, as well as the hair shaft, then it gets incubated for a few hours in a digesting solution. The DNA is then extracted and the target region is amplified. If the amplification shows that all the necessary pieces are present, then the DNA can be sequenced directly and then compared to known DNA from humans, bears, cows, etc. If all the pieces are not present in sufficient quantity, then the amplified DNA must be cloned in order to produce enough DNA to sequence. Without a follicle at the base of

the hair, the quality of the DNA is greatly reduced and usually consists of smaller, deteriorated fragments. Mitochondrial marker genes can be used to clone the fragmented DNA, a process that is much more involved.

The reader may wonder why DNA analysis is so useful in solving crimes and still be of such limited value in proving the existence of undocumented animal species. The biggest difference is that when looking for evidence of unproved animals like bigfoots, reference samples of bigfoot DNA are not available for comparison purposes. Assigning unknown DNA to a specific animal species relies on making a match against reference DNA that is known to originate from the same species. Without a reference sample of sasquatch DNA, the best result that can possibly come from an analysis of suspected sasquatch DNA is to find that the unknown DNA does not match the DNA of any of the known DNA samples in the reference collection.

One lab may routinely work with bear DNA, in which case they would have a good handle on the polymorphisms on a specific gene that are used to identify (or rule out) bear DNA. Another lab may do work with baboons, monkeys, or other primates, in which case they would have the markers that are used to identify DNA that is of primate origin. Beyond such general determinations, more specific matches are uncertain without comparison DNA from the same species. One disappointing reality is that even when making comparisons to DNA that is known to originate from the same species, there is never a 100 percent match. Every individual's DNA is, of course, a little different from anyone else's, with the obvious exception of clones or identical twins. A DNA match of about 78 percent is typical for human DNA comparisons.

In criminal investigations, DNA identification relies on collecting a DNA sample from the suspect and using it to match against DNA collected at the crime scene. Only then can a 100 percent match be made, and even then the match is only done on a portion of the very long, chain like molecule that is deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA. Most of this very long chain has not yet been mapped in humans. Select portions of the molecule have been thoroughly mapped as a part of the "Human Genome Project" but we are still many years away from complete mapping of these very large molecules. Currently, about thirty percent of the human DNA molecule is mapped and obviously much more time and trouble has been invest-

ed in mapping the human genome than any other species. How can we ever hope to thoroughly map even a small portion of an undocumented species with miniscule amounts of DNA available for analysis, and much of it suspect for one reason or another? However, Dr. Fahrenbach informs me that he is not utterly pessimistic about the chances of isolating sasquatch DNA. He writes:

> "Certain sequences of specific mitochondrial genes are diagnostic for the group of mammals your are dealing with (bigfoots) and others would tell how far such a primate would be removed from man in terms of branching off from a common ancestor. If I had some tissue or a bit of skin, we could get pretty close."

At this point, Fahrenbach considers DNA work on sasquatch hairs to be, "interesting circumstantial evidence that is not yielding to DNA analysis, despite intensive tries by two laboratories (Ohio State University and Stanford University), including an experienced molecular phylogeneticist who worked, i.a., on chimp hair from nests to determine blood relationships."

So what was the specific result of the two intensive tries? Naturally no match with DNA of known species, but even if the DNA was from a known species, there would not be a 100 percent match for reasons explained above. More interestingly, there was a match in the 30 percent range with human DNA. While this may be an intriguing result, it is not so conclusive as to "prove" anything. Then there will always be those who allege that the sample was somehow contaminated with tissue from the handler of the material and so the human-like percentage of the result is suspect. Remember your scientific method. Only by replicating the results on multiple future DNA analyses can such ambiguous results be considered reliable. But what could be more unsatisfying than an elaborate and expensive DNA work-up that produced a result like "30 percent known DNA of possible primate origin, 70 percent unmatched DNA." Obviously, this is not the definitive evidence we seek.

It is safe to say that trying to prove the existence of the sasquatch with DNA evidence, like much of bigfoot research in general, is a bit of a "Catch 22": In order to prove that DNA is from a bigfoot, you first must have some bigfoot DNA. Hair is the most likely source of

possible bigfoot DNA but hair produces some of the most deteriorated and least useful DNA fragments.

If DNA does not hold great promise for establishing the existence of sasquatches, and if we stubbornly accept that the thousands of eyewitness cannot all be wrong, what remains as a source of evidence that science will accept? Photographic evidence is being vigorously pursued but it does not take very many paragraphs to explain why no photograph is sufficiently reliable, particularly in this day of digitized images and computerized photographic manipulations. While film and video have the same inherent problems, video images may hold some promise, but only if the images are close up and of a longer time duration than the current standard-bearer of sasquatch imagery, which is the Patterson-Gimlin footage.

Filmed in October, 1967, in the northwest corner of California, this short clip of home movie film stands up to serious forensic scrutiny. Attempts to recreate the scene using modern costuming technology fall woefully short of successfully reproducing the anatomical detail such as hand flexion, muscle movement, joint movement, and more. But for all its merit, the Patterson/Gimlin footage is too short and the image is too tiny to be definitive, though it is still the best footage that exists. So, someone who wishes to push the envelope of photographic evidence must gather imagery that is closer, more detailed, and longer. It may still fall short of incontrovertible proof, but it will be a huge step in the right direction. So far, this has not happened. Many have tried to surreptitiously photograph these creatures including myself, always with the same result: the creatures have no inclination whatsoever to cooperate with that agenda. It is my guess that we are hurrying the process too greatly, and defeating ourselves by doing so.

To review, the existing types of evidence that support the bigfoot hypothesis are photographic evidence, casts of body impressions (footprints, handprints, or partial body prints), spoor (hair samples, feces, etc), and sighting reports. Sighting reports will never be material evidence, but properly investigated sighting reports can teach us so much about the creature's appearance and behavior that the next chapter will cover this kind of evidence in greater detail. Photographic evidence exists but it, too, will always be suspect unless the quality of the photographic evidence greatly improves in the future. An extended piece of close range video would be needed to

satisfy the expectations of skeptical scientists. Someday this may happen, but I'm not holding my breath.

The surprise to most people is that footprint casts turn out to be more compelling evidence than hair samples. It may seem odd that an actual piece of one of these creatures, even if it is only a piece of discarded hair, is less important as evidence than a plaster cast of a footprint, a hand print, or another part of the bigfoot anatomy. But plaster casts provide a great deal of information about anatomy and physiology of the creatures. Track casts that pass muster with the experts are impossible to fake but this fact will never be widely acknowledged. It simply requires more study of the subject than most scientists are willing to do. But to those who have evaluated all the aspects of the various kinds of evidence, the consensus seems to be that track casts tell us more and are more compelling as evidence.

The problem with hair samples is that they bear such a striking similarity to our own human hair. It is fair to suppose, based on this apparent fact, that these hairs are not bigfoot hairs at all. Perhaps they are simply human hairs that are collected under the mistaken belief that they are actually bigfoot hairs. The fact that the hairs are collected under circumstances that make them more compelling, such as in conjunction with an eyewitness sighting of the creatures, does not add to the evidentiary value of the hairs, since the eyewitness aspects of the account are unconfirmable. What if we venture outside the strict standards of scientific evidence for a moment and tentatively accept the fact that at least some of these hairs really did come from bigfoot creatures, just as the eyewitness assert? Then these hair samples may be telling us something about the sasquatch that is potentially overlooked and yet very important. The hairs that are being considered as possible bigfoot hairs are essentially indistinguishable from human hairs. It took me a while to grasp the significance of this fact but it may actually be a tremendously important clue as to the origin and nature of these creatures. Could it be that they share a common ancestry with humans that is more direct than has been previously considered? That would help explain the striking similarities in hair morphology.

There are other kinds of evidence that support the bigfoot hypothesis, but the problems get even thornier. Feces, or scat, must exist if the creatures exist and I have acquired a few possible samples that come with good documentation. But don't look for anything com-

pelling to come from the examination of scat. It tells us a lot about the diet of the creature but it does not give us much we can use to prove its very existence. It is generally alleged that the scat comes from bear. If anyone has acquired a suitably fresh scat and then invested the time and money needed to demonstrate the fact that it is truly of bigfoot origin, I am not aware of it. If bones have been found, I am also unaware of that, but I don't discount the possibility. When it comes to the existence of bones, not to mention a carcass or even a live specimen, it must be emphasized that not having knowledge of such evidence is not the same as claiming that such an event has never occurred. All that can be claimed for certain is that such evidence, if it does exist, is not available for public inspection.

Which brings us to the final kind of evidence, which is the only kind of evidence that will seal the deal, and that is all or part of a bigfoot carcass. Grover Krantz has long argued for the need to secure a bigfoot carcass. It is the only kind of evidence that is acceptable to the International Zoological Society, which is the organization that officially recognizes newly discovered species. The only thing that will satisfy their standard of evidence for any new species is the presentation of a carcass or live specimen of the species. Once, the IZS rejected evidence of a new species that was subsequently vindicated. The first duck-billed platypus pelt to be presented to this august body was initially rejected as an obvious hoax.

Remember that scientists are particularly reluctant to accept extraordinary claims. Remember Sagan's line, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." Claiming that bigfoots exist and have been somehow overlooked by science is quite an extraordinary claim. Dr. Krantz is, therefore, quite correct when he contends that we need a body to seal the deal. "Nothing else will do," was one of his familiar phrases. Krantz was widely criticized for advocating the killing of even one of this rare, noble, and even human-like species. One memorable image from a TV documentary depicted Krantz with a rifle in hand at a forest promontory. He took a lot of flak for that one even though many others have entertained similar ideas.

Bigfoot researchers are sometimes approached by such determined but deluded sportsmen who announce their plans to entice a bigfoot into a situation where they will trap or shoot it. Such plans are not just a public safety hazard. To me, it is a plan that is even more futile than it is cruel. I would argue that such bold plans sell these creatures a bit

short in the area of forest savvy and general intelligence. Any species that has remained so well secluded for so long is surely too clever and well equipped to be caught in the cross hairs of some Great White Hunter.

It seems like a statement of the obvious to say that a bigfoot specimen has not yet been collected and presented to science and that it is the dream of every bigfoot researcher to be the first one to present a body or bones to the scientific community. After examining the vast quantity of anecdotal data that was gathered in my own research, I suspect that a carcass has already been acquired, perhaps more than once. The physical remains do exist, but they have not been presented to the assembled scientific community, the news media, or the public.

People who doubt that bigfoots exist always ask me why no bones have ever been found. I generally reply, "How do you know they haven't been found?"

Of course, they give me a funny look and reply, "Because we would have heard about something as important as that!"

I then ask, "Whose job is it to tell you?"

The obvious answer is, "The news media."

At risk of being difficult, I might ask one more question: "Might it also be someone else's job to do everything in their power to prevent such profoundly important evidence from ever coming before the public?"

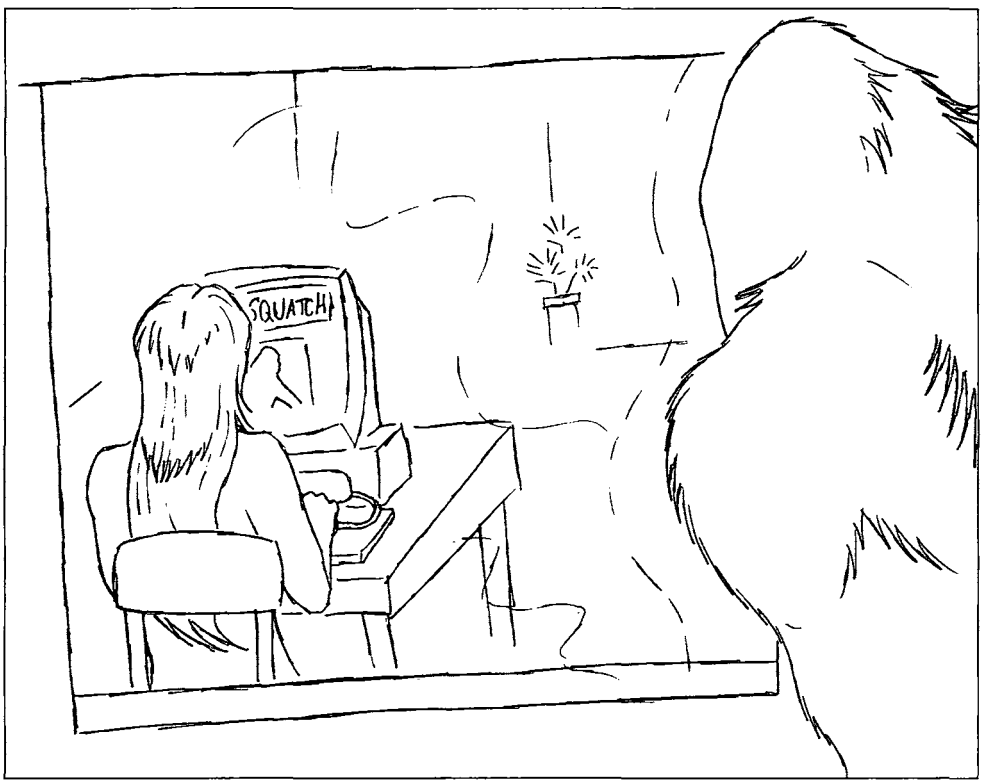
John Green, the most distinguished of the emeritus bigfoot researchers, very much doubts that such a profoundly important anthropological find would somehow be kept from the public if it did indeed exist. He can think of no possible reason why such important evidence would be concealed by military or government entities.

Most people share John Green's view that there is no obvious reason to conceal the most important anthropological discovery of the century. John was a career journalist before he retired and he naturally trusts that the media would put the story before the public if it transpired.

I naively entered the world of bigfoot research believing that the news of bigfoots' existence was not something that justified secrecy and cover-up. I felt that it was simply a matter of gathering the evidence and presenting it to science and the media. It didn't seem like an impossible problem at all. In the ten years since then, I have not

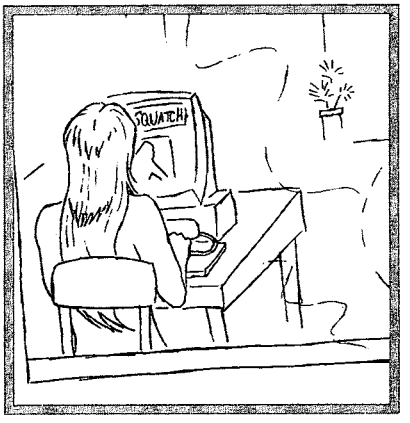
only seen solid evidence that bigfoots exist, but I have also seen evidence that there are efforts to keep their existence a secret and I will present that evidence.

Read on.



chapter two

Cybersleuthing



The computer is either the bigfoots' best friend or their worst enemy. Best friend if the sasquatches want to achieve the official recognition that their species deserves. The Internet has provided some of the best evidence yet that bigfoots really exist. But if bigfoots want to keep their existence and their mysterious ways under wraps, then the computer is their worst enemy. Computers, and the Internet, are indispensable tools for gathering and storing information that is provided by the rare and isolated people who are actually having first-hand experiences involving bigfoots. Sighting report information can be instantly relayed to field researchers. In short, computers make it infinitely easier for bigfoot hunters and researchers to hassle bigfoots.

While bigfoot sightings are undeniably rare events, they do happen and there are many more sightings than most people realize. The thousands of accumulated and investigated sightings in North America are a small fraction of the total sightings that actually occur. Pioneer researcher Grover Krantz estimated that only one sighting in a thousand gets reported. I used to doubt this, but I don't any more. I have gathered a surprising number of sighting reports from neighbors and acquaintances in my local area who share their accounts with me only because they hear that I am a local researcher. They have no intention of sharing their sighting with any official source on or off the Internet. If I can acquire so many unreported sightings just from my local area, then maybe Krantz wasn't so far off. One in a thousand still seems a bit high, but maybe one in five hundred, anyway.

One hurdle to better reporting is the fact that most people still don't have access to a computer or are unaware of the fact that there

are websites where people are invited to report their sighting experiences. Then there's the widely held belief that if a sighting is reported on the Internet, everyone in the world will hear about it by tomorrow's sunrise and the location will then be overrun with bigfoot chasers by nightfall. Others feel that if you give your name to anyone on the Internet, you will be buried in junk mail and your identity will be stolen.

Bear in mind that most people who have a close encounter with a bigfoot don't have an "eyeball" sighting. They just have a spooky experience while camping or hiking in the woods. These experiences may consist of loud creature calls that seem to the witness to be neither animal nor human in origin. Loud crashing around in the bushes may be heard by hunters or campers and combined with a powerfully bad smell. A very alarmed pet suddenly barks madly into the night. A backpack left against a tree gets emptied out, but nothing is missing except a bag of uncooked oats. Some large footprints are found in the back pasture. Chickens are missing from the coop and the door to the chicken coop is torn off the hinges. Such events generally occur after dark and leave the witness more than a little mystified as to what just happened.

Sometimes an actual sighting will also occur, but not usually. Just as often, the hunter or camper who hears the loud grunts or screams is too busy high-tailing it out of there to see the creature that is making all the intimidating noises. Since hunters tend to be a fairly macho bunch, they don't enjoy being scared silly by unknown or unseen creatures. And they also don't enjoy getting teased when they admit that they were terrified by something in the woods, so most such events don't get reported. At least not right away.

It's wrong to assume that every spooky experience that happens to someone in the woods is the work of a bigfoot. But my experience has also shown me that the opposite error happens just as often: genuine bigfoot encounters get dismissed by skeptics as the work of an over-active imagination. Mysterious events that happen to someone in the woods are greeted with so much skepticism when they do get shared that the witness never discusses it again. Witnesses get ridiculed or just shrugged off by everyone except a person who has had a similar experience.

But even after a witness learns that most people don't take a bigfoot sighting seriously, the vividness and the mysteriousness of the

experiences surrounding the incident linger in their mind. They learn the hard way not to share the experience with anyone in their circle of friends and family, but they don't forget the incredible noises they heard, or that hulking form they saw rise, turn, and enter the woods in two huge strides. Sightings have been happening like this as long as the continent has been settled by Europeans. But, only since the mid-1990s has there been an efficient, computer-driven means of gathering these rare and widely scattered occurrences.

Since most people who have a sighting don't know about the websites that collect them, they don't report the sightings when they happen. But later on, they may hear about modern bigfoot research through a magazine article. Or they might hear a discussion about bigfoot on a late-night talk-radio station, while they are changing the tires on the tractor in the barn. (Rural people listen to the radio a lot while they are doing their chores and they seem to like talk-radio.) The farmer stops working and listens more intently when a caller describes a situation that is very similar to that terrifying experience the farmer once had and that he has never forgotten. Mention is made on the radio interview of bigfoot websites that have sprung up on the Internet like mushrooms after a rainfall.

Soon the guy is in front of a computer and typing "bigfoot" into a search engine such as Google or even, yes, Bigfoot. It lists dozens of websites, some of which are spoofs and others which are patently profane. But one website gets prominent mention on just about every search engine. It is established, it has a serious and scientific home page, and it is staffed by veteran researchers. And most importantly, it has an enormous on-line database of sighting reports from all parts of the continent. Clicking on a map of the continent presents the state and then the county of interest to the web surfer. As often as not, the hunter, hiker, or motorist will find a sighting report that originates from the same woods they just got scared out of. The report often includes one particular statement that resonates with the way a recent witness has felt ever since their sighting: "I've been hunting those woods all my life. I've heard plenty of bear and cougar and elk but I've never heard anything like that before and I've never felt so scared in my life. I'll never again go back to those woods alone!"

Seeing such a report might resurrect the chills that he felt when the witness had that strange experience, but at last he knows that

there are other people who are describing experiences that are identical to the one he had. At last the witness has found an explanation, however strange, for that frightening event. That still doesn't mean he intends to report his own sighting experience. He may not have the time, or is too self-conscious about his bad spelling to submit a report. If he's up on his language skills, or maybe just a little on the outgoing side, he or she might go ahead and submit a report.

Now imagine this scenario happening on a continental scale. Something usually triggers it, like a researcher being interviewed on a talk-radio show that favors paranormal stuff. Or it might be a magazine or newspaper article about a rash of local creature sightings. All of the people who hear or read the piece don't end up submitting sighting reports, thank heavens, but enough of them do that the website is suddenly deluged with sighting reports from around the continent. Dozens of reports appear with full contact information and precise location details.

I investigated the sighting reports that came in on a website called the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO) for five years. In the early days, I took care of all the sighting reports for the whole Pacific Northwest. That would be impossible now. Sightings come in much more frequently these days and the reports are investigated more thoroughly. A state with as many sightings as Oregon needs several investigators. Washington is even busier, receiving more reports than any other state.

The descriptions of events that appear in sighting reports ranges from the mundane sighting of a bigfoot dashing across a darkened stretch of rural highway to accounts that feature extended periods of observation at close range. Some reports are so vivid and remarkable it would take a fiction writer on the order of Stephen King to make them up. Bogus reports do show up as well, but the dirty little secret there is that they are pretty easy to identify. The crank reports are loaded with sexual or macho overtones, they are written in the vocabulary of a third grader, and of course, they lack any of the requested contact information that researchers use to verify the authenticity of the reports. They might even toss in a put-down directed at the doofuses who take bigfoot sightings seriously.

There is no investigative protocol that can be universally applied to all sighting reports. Investigating a sighting report is an attempt to determine several things. One is trying to verify the credibility of

the witness and to learn something about the creature that was seen if the witness does appear credible. One attempts to understand what the creature was doing there, and why. It is impossible, of course, to absolutely verify any particular sighting report. Even if every bigfoot witness were to pass a polygraph test, there would be those who insist that all witnesses are either delusional or lying. They remind themselves that everything on the Internet is probably baloney.

Personally, I don't feel that I need a polygraph to investigate bigfoot sightings. I take reassurance from the fact that I'm a middle school teacher. I hear lies every day, 'round about the time I ask the students to get out their homework. Even if I didn't have so much experience with liars (not all of whom are the students), statistical comparisons provide a very solid indicator of authenticity. To a sufficiently experienced researcher, the descriptions submitted by witnesses yield such distinct and recurring patterns that it becomes quite easy to sort out truth from fiction. The events that are described fit one of several patterns that help to identify authentic descriptions. Of course, there are so many sighting reports in the database by now that someone could study the patterns prior to filing a sighting report and then conjure up a bogus sighting by stitching together elements of other people's reports. Fortunately, most people can't be bothered.

My wife, the original bigfoot skeptic, conspired with her brother to try this. They submitted a fabricated sighting report to the bigfoot website for which I am a volunteer investigator. They crafted a bogus southern Oregon sighting report, presumably as a test of my ability to resolve truth from fiction. I think they also ascribed to the view that if their sighting report was a fake, then all other sighting reports must also be faked. Their report described a bigfoot-style creature skulking along the crest of a distant ridge. Not a typical kind of sighting situation at all, but not impossible, I suppose. The details of the location, though, were very precise and verifiable, due to the fact, as I would later find, that my wife described a remote location in southern Oregon where she had once done geologic mapping. Their first mistake was their failure to provide full contact information. No name or phone number was provided, just an e-mail address (which I should have recognized as belonging to my brother-in-law.)

Like most folks who see the database of reports, my wife sus-

pected that reports get posted to the database without any real contact with the witness. Perhaps she thought all those calls I made to witnesses were just social calls. She didn't know that we would never post a report that had scant contact information, nor did she expect us to try to make verbal contact with the alleged witness by phone to confirm the account. It was supposed to be a joke on me and they expected to have the chance to tease me when I e-mailed them at the address that was provided. The joke ended up being on them: I handed the report off to another investigator, Autumn Williams, who was closer to and more familiar with the location. She was aware of other reports from the same general area and was very eager to get a little more information on what they claimed to have seen. So she persisted in e-mailing him with pleas for more information, despite the fact that he never replied to the messages. In fact, he became somewhat embarrassed by the whole matter and eventually disconnected the e-mail address. Not long after that, he confessed to me that he faked the report as a joke and he asked me to tell this to the investigator.

If a witness does makes him/herself available for interviewing, if the events that are described are plausible given the investigator's knowledge of bigfoot behavior, if the location checks out as the kind of place where a bigfoot sighting might occur, then the sighting report gets posted on the on-line database of sighting reports. Sometimes, feedback on the report after it gets posted will cast doubt on its validity and the report will be removed from the database.

If the sighting happened recently, the investigator will hustle out to the site in hopes of finding tracks or other physical evidence, perhaps in the company of the witness. Most, but not all investigators know the remote areas of their state well enough to recognize a phony location. Having a detailed set of maps for the state is essential. Nothing beats meeting the witness in person and hearing them recount the event. Investigators who have interviewed enough bigfoot witnesses know that there is usually an involuntary physical response that the witness displays when recounting a very frightening experience, and a close range bigfoot sighting is quite a terrifying experience.

When I first saw the sighting come in from someone named Randy Trusty, I thought it was a prank. Not only was he claiming two separate bigfoot encounters, but with a name like Randy Trusty

I thought it had to be a joke. Yet, he was very sincere on the phone and eager to have a face-to-face. The next Saturday, Jim Henick and I motored up to Longview early in the morning to meet with the witness. Randy was a mill worker, an avid bow hunter, a blues guitar player, and a big fan of bonsai horticulture. He was eager to show us the locations of his two sightings but first he recounted the experiences for us in his living room.

As Randy described the events, his arms were covered with goose bumps and the hair on his arms was standing straight up. I have seen other witnesses get tears in their eyes, their voices crack with emotion, or the hair on the back of their neck stands up. It seems that the emotional intensity that is felt when one sees the equivalent of a real live monster is so great that simply recollecting the experience conjures up the emotional intensity all over again. It must be very distressing for the witness if they are not expecting it, but at least it serves to indicate very clearly the sincerity of the witness who manifests these physical responses. It is also a very handy way of determining the probable truthfulness of a reporting party (or "r.p.," to use cop lingo.) I don't know for sure that a talented actor couldn't fake those physical reactions, but if they can fake those reactions, they are wasting their time talking to bigfoot investigators. They should be earning big bucks in Hollywood.

The Randy Trusty story had an amusing twist. Randy drove us to the woods he hunts and where he found the bigfoot tracks that moved him to file a report. A buddy of his was along for the ride. When we arrived at the edge of the woods, he and his friend pulled two shotguns out of the trunk and loaded them. Jim and I began wondering just what we had gotten ourselves into. They explained it as their need for personal protection in the event we actually did bump into a bigfoot. I knew that there was no chance of that but I shrugged. Jim and I quietly agreed to keep the two armed hunters in front of us and in sight at all times. It was another first for me: I was looking for bigfoot evidence in the company of two strangers carrying loaded shotguns. I half expected to be lying face down in a shallow grave before nightfall. It's always possible that someone posing as a bigfoot witness is really an axe murderer, but I reminded myself that bigfoot witnesses are commonly hunters, and hunters look at guns a lot differently than non-hunters. They are very used to being around guns, loaded and not loaded, and they are oblivious to the

fact that some folks are more fearful of strangers carrying guns than they are of bigfoots.

We did see a few vague bigfoot tracks that day. We also found a few large piles of feces, but nothing that was fresh enough to justify collecting it. I was more than a little nervous for the first half of our walk and I certainly didn't let those fellas out of my sight, but all's well that ends well. Randy and his buddy turned out to be friendly, intelligent folks and responsible gun handlers as well. We became friends. I got together with Randy a few times and then he moved to Texas to join a blues band.

Randy Trusty reminded me that hunters are generally trustworthy. Randy was also fairly typical of the more educated rural-living hunter of today who is as likely to own a computer as he is to own a few guns. It implies a slightly more up-to-date and educated ruralite than the stereotype that most urban folks harbor when envisioning their rural brethren.

It turns out that the Internet is a surprisingly effective means of gathering sighting reports for two reasons: The average witness is quite conflicted by the strange event that they've experienced, especially if they had an actual sighting. The Internet has spawned many bigfoot websites which provide information and encourage witnesses to report such experiences. The Internet also provides the kind of convenient yet anonymous opportunity for witnesses to report their experiences and contact a researcher if they so desire. It works particularly well for the isolated rural folk who want to unload their experience but are still a bit reluctant to discuss it publicly. Before a witness files a report, they often try to get a feel for how the website treats the subject. The database on the BFRO site tends to reassure a witness that the website is not collecting material for jokes. Seeing other reports from the same area where they had their sighting is reassuring as well. Or they may see that someone else had an experience that perfectly matches their own, even though it took place somewhere far away. Suddenly, they do not feel so crazy or alone in what they experienced, and they may become a bit more confident about sharing their report or contacting an investigator who can answer some of their lingering questions about the experience.

A genuine witness is often so eager to resolve the situation in their own mind that they express heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to relate the details of the situation. They will gladly place the

long-distance call themselves just to talk about the account with an experienced investigator. I usually e-mail my phone number to a witness and give them a time to call. They invariably call right on time. They always thank me for taking the time to talk to them and answer their questions. The most common question is, "Are they dangerous? (Answer: yes.) Should I be concerned for my family?" (Not as long as you don't try to shoot it.) A prompt phone call from a witness, on their own dime, and their questions that suggest genuine concern are good indications of a sincere, truthful witness.

Contrary to popular belief, most witnesses that I have interviewed don't want any attention or publicity of their situation. This is another indication of a sincere witness. They are, as often as not, serious, professional people with a family, a good job, and a community that they are a part of. They are bothered by their experience but they do not want to jeopardize their job, family, and standing in the community by being know as a person who saw bigfoot or, worse yet, the one who "believes in bigfoot." Witnesses generally don't even believe in bigfoot until they have had a sighting. The sighting generates considerable mental turmoil. A big motivator for reporting a sighting seems to be the hope of at least partially resolving the sensations of fear and bewilderment that were brought about by the sighting. Basically, the witnesses are mildly traumatized, and talking with an investigator who is not just supportive, but who can answer some questions about the creature that was seen, represents a kind of therapy for the witness. This is another indication of a genuine witness, based on many interviews I have conducted.

After an investigator follows up on many such sighting reports, it becomes clear that most witnesses are honest, ordinary rural folk like Randy Trusty. Five years of investigating sighting reports all over the region gave me a feel for the phenomenon and the witnesses who report it. I don't need to investigate any more sightings to know that most sighting reports are not genuine, but the real ones get easier to identify once some investigative experience is gained. I have gathered enough information to assemble a profile on the creatures' patterns of behavior. I investigate sightings less often now. I have developed ideas for my own field experiments and that takes all the time I have to spend on bigfoot matters. I became satisfied that the bigfoot phenomenon is not only real, but that it manifests itself much more frequently than anyone realizes. How fre-

quently, I am not at all sure. But frequently enough to be certain that it is not a hoax, unless it was a hoax that is perpetrated by a vast underground network of co-conspirators.

Seeing a report about a bigfoot scampering across a darkened highway road is unspectacular in this day and age. Such reports have become so ordinary that they are quite often not investigated or posted in the database of reports. It also seems that there are highways in the U.S. with many such reported sightings over the years:

- Interstate Highway 84 between Hood River and Troutdale, Oregon.
- US Highway #14 between Cody, Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park.
- US Highway #97 between Bend, Oregon and LaPine, Oregon.

There are other kinds of sighting reports that are so ordinary or so lacking in verifiable details that they don't get looked into very often anymore. Loud screams in the night, and indistinct track finds are no big deal to anybody other than the folks who hear them. Researchers have learned that there is not a lot of new information to be gained by following up on these reports. Maybe a track is found. More commonly, you find nothing tangible at all. As an investigator, you just find yourself standing in a place where a bigfoot once was. Big deal. You have virtually no chance of seeing it there again any time soon. Following up on a lot of bigfoot sighting reports illustrates this point very clearly. One can visit sighting locations until the cows come home and never actually see a bigfoot.

Hopefully, the emphasis of bigfoot research has shifted in response to the realization that visiting such sighting locations does not particularly help. A better approach to bigfoot research is empowering the witnesses with the information and strategy necessary to do their own evidence collecting and to make their own attempts to bring the situation to the fore. This marginalizes the importance of the researcher but it is more likely to yield useful results. If anyone is going to make a close-range observation of a bigfoot feeding or drinking or grooming, it will be the person who is as much a fixture of the landscape as the trees and shrubs, not the visiting researcher. The series of sightings by Glen Thomas in the

Mount Hood National Forest are a good example of this, as well as the years of detailed sightings described by Janice Carter Coy and her sister Lila in the book Fifty Years With Bigfoot.

Seeing a bigfoot calmly feeding or playing with its young is remarkably rare but it does get reported by credible witnesses once in a great while. And investigators know that the circumstances surrounding how such experiences come to happen are quite difficult to make up. There are only a few ways that a person is likely to get a chance to see something like that and once a researcher has a sense of what those ways are, it becomes easy to determine whether the next such claim is credible. When two or three such accounts from very separate sources all match one another, then it bolsters the researcher's position that they are all credible, though it is never a thing that can be absolutely verified. Still, that is about as good as you'll ever be able to do in the bigfoot biz. There is no scientific validity to the information and maybe there never will be. But the emerging pattern does more than just support the view that the people who are reporting it are credible. It suggests a pattern of behavior to the creatures themselves that is worth remembering, for it may prove useful in anticipating the behavior of the creatures in the future.

Not every researcher has the head for retaining thousands of obscure details of bigfoot behavior, but if one can, it is very helpful when trying to overlay yet another witness' account against the backdrop of all the previous sighting reports the researcher has seen. It helps the researcher resolve credibility issues, and it enables the researcher to gradually assemble a profile of the creature being studied. This is not a particularly new idea. Before there was an Internet, there were a few pioneers who realized that collecting, investigating, and plotting bigfoot sighting reports had scientific value. Journalist John Green is generally credited with being the first person to do this and to publish his collective findings. He focused on what we now call the "Class A" or eyewitness sightings of the creatures, as opposed to the indirect or "Class B" indications of a bigfoot presence. As well as the "Class A" sightings, Green was interested in "track finds" since they provide good physical evidence. John could see that sighting reports and track finds were very important when trying to track the whereabouts, population, and behavior of bigfoots. John resides in British Columbia, which is one of the richest sources of bigfoot sightings on the continent. He used

his many years of acquired skill as an investigator and journalist, as well as his ideal location, to assemble the largest pre-Internet collection of bigfoot sightings, complete with eyewitness interviews. Without any of the benefit of the World Wide Web, Green was somehow able to get wind of numerous sightings, investigate them, determine which ones were credible, and then plot them on maps in hopes of getting a sense of the population. It was immeasurably tougher and more expensive to acquire and publish such information forty years ago. John Green's research and database remains an impressive feat, especially since he managed to stay married while doing it.

It was a groundbreaking effort and the books that John published ushered in the new age of sasquatch information dissemination that persists to this day. John even suggested in 1970 that a computer would be immensely useful in storing and sorting all the information. How right he was! He wondered whether the necessary programming work could ever be afforded. Obviously, no one had ever heard of "software" in 1970.

After reading a draft of this chapter, John Green had this to add:

> In 1970, I was only beginning to direct my efforts in that direction (compiling a database) in addition to field investigations. By the time I wrote The Apes Among Us in the mid '70s I had recorded more than 1600 reports. I was able to accumulate so many because in those days I was in touch with nearly everyone who was investigating and I operated, at my expense, an information exchange in which some of the most active investigators participated.
>
> I started entering reports in a sophisticated computer database in 1989, and have more than 4,000 entered now. Of course there is no way I can handle everything that comes in to the BFRO, let alone everything to be found elsewhere on the internet, but I don't know of anyone else with a computer program that can find answers in the data the way mine can. Unfortunately I don't have the computer skills or the statistical skills to make full use of it, and the MSDOS software involved, although powerful, won't even run properly beyond Windows 98, so I can't readily provide it to

people who might make better use of it, and in the few cases when I have they haven't.

As to humor, if my experiences are any indication I'm sure you have encountered lots of good material, but it can be hard to work in without offending people you don't want to offend. I was lucky with Ivan Marx, I sent him the chapter about him before I put it in the book and he didn't object at all.

-John Green 12/02/2002

Other events like the track casts made in northern California by Jerry Crew in 1958 and the Patterson/Gimlin footage shot in 1967 did as much as Green's work to increase public awareness of the bigfoot phenomenon, but the idea of using potentially spurious sighting report data to assemble a profile on an animal that was not as mythical as it first appeared belongs to John Green. For anyone who was willing to accept John's judgment and investigative competence, these books were the first published attempts to portray the distribution of the creatures behind the phenomenon.

Green concluded several things in 1970 based on analysis of his files. One obvious conclusion of his that is verifiable using today's expanded volume of sighting reports is the fact that bigfoots operate out of remote areas which are mountainous, or forested, or both. Strange experiences that fit the pattern of bigfoot encounters happen almost exclusively to people who live, recreate, or travel through remote areas. All researchers know that bigfoot is a decidedly rural phenomenon. People simply do not see bigfoots in cities and towns. People might see bigfoots in some suburban situations, but only if the suburb is bordered by tracts of forestland. The woods are most definitely the refuge of bigfoots. The further out into the woods one ventures, the more likely one is to see a bigfoot. The bigfoots may venture out of the woods, but not very far and not for very long. And if they do, it is generally under cover of darkness.

Even Green's early sighting data suggested that sasquatch activity is not completely confined to the nocturnal woods, but sasquatches certainly are more active after dark. Therefore, the people who experience this phenomenon tend to be people who find a reason to

be poking around in isolated patches of woods after dark. This might help explain why so few city dwellers ever see bigfoots and why they tend to doubt that they even exist. The Internet and the bigfoot information it now provides seems to be changing that, too. Bigfoot websites are not only gathering the information about bigfoots from widely dispersed rural sources, but it is also making that information available to people everywhere else. The Internet has emerged as the source of current information for people who want to know more about bigfoot. The information generally lacks depth and interpretation, but there is a vast amount of raw information on the Internet.

It is difficult to be certain who pioneered the idea of a bigfoot website. My vote goes to Henry Franzoni. In my view, he deserves credit for being the first one to apply the Internet to the collection and publication of bigfoot sighting report data. Henry offers these recollections:

> I made my website and mailing list in October of 1993. I made Ray Crowe's in October, 1993, and Peter Byrne's in January of '94. I had Matt as a sub directory for a year or two shortly after that. Ira Walters was a student of Grover Krantz's that made a track cast and skull reproduction for sale on a site for Grover in October of '93, so he might have tied me for Sept of '93, I'm not sure... but we had the first Internet presence with the Usenet newsgroup in late '93, before the first decent release of Mosaic (the first decent web browser) in late '93.

Henry moved on to other matters and left it to Matthew Moneymaker to create what may be the most elaborate of today's bigfoot websites. It will no doubt be alleged by some of the other personalities who experienced this important era first-hand that I do not have my facts quite right but the reader probably gets the idea: a combination of personalities, ideas, and technologies has led to a means of documenting the bigfoot phenomenon that was previously impossible.

The website Moneymaker has developed doesn't make money, but its scientific treatment of the bigfoot phenomenon is very reassuring to those conflicted folks who need to reconcile their bigfoot

sighting. The serious, scientific tone of his website and the involvement of academics like Drs. Fahrenbach and Meldrum appeals to serious devotees of the subject. The slick and sophisticated website navigation devised by Vaughn Hughes, a brilliant senior software engineer at Intel, gives things a more polished look and operation than virtually any website, bigfoot or otherwise.

The BFRO website may have motivated other bigfoot websites to mimic it. Recently, websites that focus on bigfoot sightings from only a particular state are becoming more common. This makes good sense because the BFRO has always been spread a little thin when it comes to following up on sighting reports in certain states or regions where they do not have very many active investigators. A group that focuses exclusively on a single state ought to do a better job of knowing the remote areas of the state and following up on the reports. They should also do a better job of getting local coverage by the local media outlets, so that local people know where they are and how to reach them. Local researchers do run the risk of appearing provincial and unschooled, especially if their website lacks a serious, professional appearance. In any case, the Internet is accommodating an increased public interest in weird but real phenomena, and from that has come a very big increase in reported sightings of bigfoots. This is generating an expanding niche for bigfoot websites, especially those with a single-state focus.

Sighting report data seems to suggest that the bigfoot phenomenon is much more widespread throughout mainland North America than was previously suspected. Back in the days of early researchers like John Green and Bob Titmus, it was radical just to assert that bigfoots existed. Bigfoot sightings outside the Pacific Northwest were doubted, even by serious bigfoot devotees. We now know that this was a mistake. Bigfoot sightings occur in all regions of the country, always in forested or mountainous areas. They are too numerous and verifiable to be uniformly rejected. States like Ohio, Indiana, and New York, Florida, and Texas that were always considered too populated with *Homo sapiens* to have any room left for bigfoots now are understood to contain enough unpopulated forest and rangeland to allow for bigfoot activity. More reports are surfacing all the time, even in states that were once seen as unlikely locations for bigfoot sightings. A big question now among veteran researchers is whether the increase in continent-wide sighting

reports means the creatures are increasing in numbers or whether we have simply tapped into a vast backlog of unreported sightings.

The proliferation of websites seems to have rendered people more willing than ever to report sightings or just to take the whole matter seriously. The media is more willing than ever to treat the phenomenon seriously in print. Evidence and information that the Internet provides is credible enough that it becomes much tougher these days for a reporter or editor to put a skeptical, tongue-in-cheek spin on the subject. The reports are so persistent, and the patterns too consistent, to be dismissed as the stuff of myth. A sea change in thinking about the mysteries still contained within our natural world is taking place. No matter better illustrates that point than the bigfoot subject.

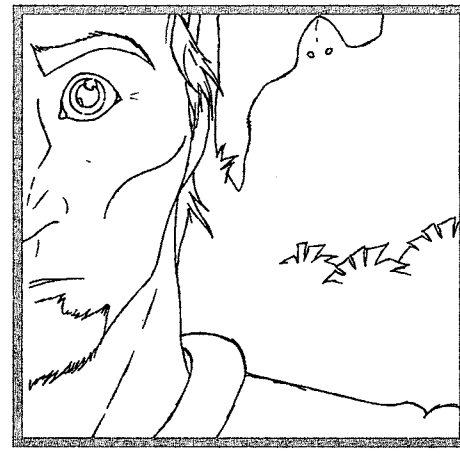
The Internet now contains so much consistent, credible evidence that even if ninety percent of anecdotal sighting data is dismissed as bunk, the remaining ten percent is sufficiently solid that it becomes more difficult than ever to dismiss as fanciful. The subject has gotten recent endorsements from a few reputable primate scientists including Jane Goodall and George Schaller.

Even the contemporary, Internet-accessed witness of today seems a bit more astute and observant when they encounter a bigfoot these days. They are not being coached, they are just learning what to look for, where to look for it, and what to do once they find it. As a result of Internet exposure or TV documentaries, witnesses more often seem to know what they are seeing. They seem to understand that any evidence they can gather is important. They may even be a bit more curious and a bit less fearful than they used to be, on average. A case in point is this statement that was included in a 2002 sighting report from Washington State:

> "I have always scoffed at reports of Bigfoot and other strange beasts roaming the woods. I attributed it to people's overactive imaginations. In the past I've sided with the scientific explanations that there would have to be a large population of these animals to exist and there have never been any remains found of a dead bigfoot. However, I highly doubt that science can explain away what my wife and I experienced that day. We will probably go back and kayak Swift Creek Lake. However, next time I am taking my camera!"

chapter three

Full Retreat



Most people who report a bigfoot 'sighting' don't actually see a bigfoot. Even after the crank reports are weeded out, which is anywhere from fifty to ninety percent of what we in the BFRO get, the sighting reports that can be fully documented are not usually eyeball sightings. This does not help convince the skeptics there is any validity to the bigfoot hypothesis. But I find that the "Class B" encounters are often more illuminating than the "Class A" or eyeball sightings.

For instance, the most common type of "Class A" sighting is the proverbial "I saw a bigfoot dash across the road." These reports usually happen at night on empty, desolate highways. One does not learn much about behavior from such a sighting and the glimpse of the creature is too fleeting to get good descriptions of size and appearance. That doesn't mean one learns nothing from such sightings. It means only that they are not very informative about the creature that was sighted. One does learn that the creatures are seen to have an immense stride, and they usually move very fast.

These sightings may also do a great deal to mislead researchers. Some of these sightings are very near misses. This leads bigfoot researchers to the conclusion that bigfoots are not very bright, and that it is just a matter of time before one of them is killed by a car or truck. I have looked into so many of these sightings that I have developed serious doubts about both conclusions.

Andrew Boydston was home alone one April night in 2002 when the phone rang. It was his wife, calling from her cell phone to inform him that she had just seen a bigfoot.

She and their teenaged son were en route from their home in Idaho to a relative's house in Hillsboro, Oregon. The pair was driving west

on I-84, heading toward Portland. They were traveling through a landscape of impressive cliffs and majestic waterfalls in the Columbia River Gorge but they weren't enjoying the sights. It was 9:30 p.m. and quite dark. Just after passing by Multnomah Falls, the tallest and most fabulous of them all, a tall, skinny creature emerged from the brush, crossed the oncoming lanes, vaulted the barrier that divided the freeway, and dashed in front of their minivan. They came within a few feet of colliding with the creature, maybe less.

Jason, the son, was driving and mom was in the passenger seat. He had to swerve and brake to avoid the furry pedestrian. In the blink of an eye, the creature crossed the freeway, cleared the guardrail, and vanished into the brush on the other side. The two motorists were understandably stunned, but Linda did what any good Idaho gal would do. She called her husband, Andrew. He was home to take the call and he knew his way around the Internet, so Andrew quickly submitted the sighting report to the BFRO website.

It was around 10 p.m. when I saw Andrew's message on my computer. The post was only minutes old. In it, he briefly explained what had happened to his wife and son. He also offered two telephone numbers under the contact information. I dialed the first number, Andrew's home phone, and got a busy signal. I dialed the second number and Linda Boydston answered. She and her son were still driving to Hillsboro in the minivan. By now, they had driven through Portland and were nearing their destination on Portland's far west side. The sighting was forty-five minutes old.

"Golly!" said Linda. "We haven't even gotten out of the van to meet our first Portlander yet and we've already seen a bigfoot. You must have a lot of these things around here."

"No, there aren't very many. It's just that the local Chamber of Commerce sends them out to welcome the out-of-towners," I kidded. "Seriously though, I think you managed to be in the right place at the right time."

"Well, we almost hit the thing! We missed it by inches! I thought for sure we were going to hit it! I can't believe we didn't. It was very tall, over seven feet, and very skinny. I was surprised at how skinny it was! The shoulders were very broad but it was very skinny at the waist. It looked underfed. I think you people need to feed these things a little more!"

We talked. I spoke with both of the occupants of the car. It had to

be a new record for the least time elapsed between a sighting and the first investigative debriefing. The combination of a cell phone in the car, a quick-acting spouse with a personal computer, and the fact that I checked my e-mail messages at an opportune moment, enabled the BFRO sighting report process to work about as quickly and efficiently and it ever would. Not that it got us anywhere.

It is felt that if an investigator can get to the scene of a sighting right after it happens, another sighting may occur or some really good evidence can be collected. Easier said than done. I live forty-five minutes from the location, but it was a very rainy night and a nasty spot to try and investigate, even by daylight. I wasn't about to poke around the blackberry bushes between the freeway and the Columbia River in the dark and in the pouring rain. I asked Jim Henick in Washougal to come across the river at daybreak and look over the area around mile marker #27. I went up there a day after that. We didn't find anything particularly important: two possible bigfoot tracks in leafy debris, one small but unfamiliar scat, and abundant deer sign.

Based on many other sightings in the same area by motorists and railroad personnel, it is thought that the creatures may be crossing the Columbia River in the vicinity, which also requires them to cross two parallel sets of railroad tracks, the freeway, and Washington Highway 14, all of which parallel the river for over a hundred miles. There is remote, forested country on both sides of the river in that vicinity, and a calm stretch of river with virtually no development on either bank. McCord and Bridal Veil Creeks serve as steep and heavily forested wildlife corridors that connect the Mount Hood Wilderness to the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam. It's a perfect place to make a stealthy approach to the Columbia River.

Just upstream of Bonneville Dam, Herman Creek and Wyeth Bench serve as another avenue from the upland wilderness to the Columbia. It is another well-known spot to local bigfoot researchers. It was there that in 1979, Terry Reams was riding in a car with his wife and parents when they all saw a bigfoot cross the highway. After it crossed the highway in front of their car, it turned and ran next to Terry's car, parallel to the flow of traffic. Terry got a good look at the face of the creature as it ran along beside their moving auto. He told me later that the look on the face of the creature he saw was a look of pure fear. Terry also saw the creature bounce off the side of a pick-up/camper in the other lane, then scramble up the steep bank into the

woods. Terry reported his sighting to the Hood River Sheriff's Office and they acknowledged that they had several other calls reporting the same event. The dispatcher told Terry that two of the calls were from patrolmen.

Terry's sighting is particularly well documented, and he got a longer look at the creature than any other motorist sighting I know of. The Boydston sighting is much more typical: a very brief, fleeting glimpse of the creature and a very near miss. I struggled to understand why the Boydston sighting was such a near miss when, unlike the Terry Reams sighting, there were not a lot of cars traveling the freeway at that moment. Why did the creature come so close to the Boydston's vehicle when it didn't have to? Why didn't it wait for the car to pass, and then stroll casually across the highway in total darkness, seen by no one? I cannot help but think the creatures are deliberately creating near misses with motorists. Either they are displaying and almost adolescent sense of humor by scaring motorists or they are having fun using their remarkable speed and agility to play "chicken" with speeding cars. Why would a bigfoot do such a thing? It seems pretty far-fetched to suggest that sasquatches would do such things for the entertainment value, but I see swallows and other birds doing the same thing with the bow wave and the wake that a car creates as it disrupts the air it is moving through. Birds very definitely play with speeding cars and I have seen squirrels and chipmunks make similarly risky dashes in front of my car on numerous occasions. Dolphins are frequently seen surfing the bow wave of a ship. Play was not invented by humans. It seems to occur throughout the animal kingdom, and it is used to sharpen survival skills.

This may help explain why sasquatches have such close calls with vehicles. There are certainly other possible reasons. Sometimes they may just be trying to get to the other side, but often the timing of their crossing seems to be chosen to deliberately maximize the danger.

Allen Hoyt was driving down the long gravel driveway that led to his ranch when a bigfoot sprung from the bushes and crossed the road directly in front of his car. His was the only car on the road. He was sure he was about to hit the creature and he ducked down below the dash, in anticipation of the impact and the destruction of the windshield, but the impact never happened. Somehow, the creature managed to avoid being hit, although Allen offered that the thing was so

close to the hood of his car that he can't understand how he managed to avoid hitting it. He was too busy ducking down to have seen what happened, but when he looked up, the creature was gone.

With only one slow-moving car on a whole stretch of road, if a bigfoot can't do a better job than that of avoiding traffic, then they are not very smart. I have spoken with a couple of researchers, most recently Keith Foster in Colorado, who feel that it is just a matter of time before scientists get their hands on a bigfoot roadkill. I used to feel the same way myself but I have begun to have my doubts after hearing of many near misses. I have seen and heard of so many cunning, clever, and swift moves by sasquatches that I cannot accept that a bigfoot is too stupid to avoid small amounts of traffic.

Henry Franzoni has researched Native American legends that relate to the modern bigfoot phenomenon more than anyone else I know. He reports:

> The Clackamas Indians (a branch of the Chinook), maintain that in the lands of the headwaters of the Clackamas River, adolescent bigfoot beings have to pass a test to become an adult members of the bigfoot tribe. They must jump in front of a human on a trail, and wave their hands in front of the human's face, without being seen.

This bit of lore originates from a time before the days of automobile traffic. Perhaps bigfoots have a new rite of manhood now. Perhaps they have come up with a sport that meets the same need that us "pale faces" have when we involve ourselves in "extreme sports." Maybe it is a sense of humor that motivates this behavior. They may enjoy the sport of terrifying motorists. I have seen much to support the notion that these creatures have a considerable sense of humor and that they seem to enjoy terrifying unsuspecting outdoorsmen when there is absolutely no real need to do so. It almost takes on the appearance of a training exercise, perhaps for the benefit of the young. Some of the most illuminating (and hilarious) "Class B" sighting reports illustrate this point.

Shane V. writes:

> I have always heard about these creatures but I never really gave it much thought until this happened to me. I was work-

ing for a local rancher on a bright, sunny, summer afternoon in August, 1993 in Klickitat County, WA in the "Grayback" mountains on the way up to Mount Adams, northwest of Goldendale, Washington.

My boss said that there had been cattle getting out of this one pasture he rented from someone. This pastureland was about 5 miles northwest of a former town called Block House. He sent me out there to investigate and check the fencing, and find out where the cattle were getting out. I hopped into my truck with my fence stretchers and more barbed wire. Once I reach this pastureland, I stepped out of my truck and noticed a strange smell, like human feces. I didn't give it much notice and started walking the fence line, heading west. I stopped for a cigarette and something didn't feel right. It felt like someone or something was watching me. I got up and started north on the fence line. I got half way through checking the north side of the fence when I saw why the cattle were getting out. There had been a tree thrown atop the fence, smashing down the strands of barbed wire. This tree was about 14 or 15 inches in diameter, lying where the fence used to be.

I thought this was odd. Upon further investigation, I noticed that there was a brownish-red hair on the barbed wire. I have been around cattle all my life and I have never seen this before. The hair smelled awful. I finally got the tree moved but it was no small chore. It was heavier than hell but being 6'6", 240 lbs. and in good shape, I eventually I got it moved off the fence.

All the time I felt like I was being watched from afar. I didn't like the feeling so I quickly mended the fence, finished checking the fence line on the north side, then turned back to the east, and came down to a small creek. There, I noticed these huge footprints in the wet mud. They looked fresh, no more than an hour or two old, and the size of these footprints was much bigger than mine. I wear a size 12 to 13, and I placed my foot next to a footprint in the mud. It was far big-

ger than mine. I knew that this wasn't normal because the big toe on the left foot looked like it was being dragged.

I thought to myself, "This isn't possible! There's no way a human could make this print."

It was about a size 19 or 20. I was saying to myself that I know Shaqille O'Neal hadn't been here and he's the only human that wears a size 22 triple-E shoe. I was thinking that something non-human made the prints and at that very moment I heard a grunt coming from exactly where I had just been fixing the fence! I was now scared shitless. I walked fast, almost running, back to my truck, which was parked about two miles away. I got back to my truck and noticed that the tools, the shovel, a plastic gas can, and empty soda cans were thrown out of my truck bed like someone was looking for something or helping me clean out my truck bed. I picked up everything, threw it all back in the bed of the truck, and just as I was getting ready to get in, I heard this high pitched scream coming from where I had just been.

That was it! I was gone! Outta there! I never heard anything like that in my life and as I was driving back down the road, I thought, "Please don't let that fence break again," 'cuz I didn't want to have to come back to fix it again unless someone was with me.

That was the last time I ever went out there. A few weeks later I changed my job and enlisted in the US Army, but that day will stick with me forever.

People don't believe until it happens to them. That day made a believer out of me. There's something out there and if it doesn't want to be found, you're not going to find it. It finds you.

Shane's account mentions a few items that are absolutely commonplace in bigfoot encounter chronicles. First, it must be observed that Shane never saw any undocumented primates. As mentioned in

the beginning of the chapter, most bigfoot encounters are "Class B" events that stop short of an actual sighting. In fact, the creatures are so good at staying just out of sight that you'd swear that they'd gone invisible.

Shane reported the "feeling of being watched" that is probably the most familiar phrase that is invoked by bigfoot sighting witnesses. It is difficult to know precisely what is going on when people feel this sensation, but it is so familiar to sasquatch researchers that its authenticity cannot be denied. It is abundantly clear to experienced researchers that it is a sensation that is originating from a nearby bigfoot. It is not simply the reporting party's imagination. It invariably makes the human intruder feel uneasy and generally renders them eager to get the hell out of the area.

Shane also reported the familiar, cloying stench that accompanies many bigfoot encounters. The stench is variously described as resembling ammonia, urine, rotten eggs, wet dogs, rotting garbage, or feces. There is no consensus among those who describe the smell but it is usually regarded as being much worse than skunk musk. The use of bad smells has been researched with military purposes in mind and for the sasquatch, emanating this smell seems to be yet another means of intimidating an intruder. It is very effective. The smell is not always reported by sasquatch witnesses, so it seems to be something other than the persistent body odor of the creatures. The smell is not present when someone views a sasquatch that is unaware that it is being seen by a person. Witnesses who know the sasquatch is there and are not intimidated, do not usually report a smell.

Other primates have scent glands under their arms so it is assumed by most researchers that the smell emanates from similar glands on bigfoots that they can activate at will, much like a skunk that uses its musk glands to repel an intruder when it feels threatened.

I enjoyed Shane's light-hearted reasoning that the suspected bigfoot may have been helping him clean out his truck. (The bed of my pick-up often has the same problem. It's nice to know that there is somewhere I can go to get help cleaning it.) One has to admire the creativity demonstrated by the bigfoot. I'm assuming that the overall goal of the bigfoot's actions was to frighten Shane out of the area. Emptying out the pick-up must have been an idea that was hatched only after it saw the stuff all spread out in the back of the truck. Another possibility might be that the creature was looking for food,

but that does not justify the mess, and with several head of escaped cattle nearby, it does not seem that a half-eaten, week-old sandwich from the back of the truck would be worth the trouble.

Nor is it clear why a bigfoot might throw a tree onto the barbed-wire fence in the first place. If it were an adult, I should think it would have a long enough inseam to effortlessly straddle the fence. It may have wanted to allow the cattle to escape. We can only speculate as to why. Comparing this to other similar reports suggest that they sometimes disrupt human activities and human improvements just for the sake of disrupting things. Logging and road building crews have reported finding their job-site in disarray ever since the days of Jerry Crew's track finds at a Northern California road-building job in 1958.

The noises that Shane heard are quite typical of the sounds that are reported by people who are in the close proximity of a bigfoot that seems to want the human intruders to leave the area. In my experience, these creatures can move noiselessly through the woods, even under the driest, crunchiest conditions, so any noise that is made ought to be seen as deliberate, especially when it is loud. Grunts and snorts, much less screams and loud howls in close proximity to humans must also be seen as intentional and for the purposes of intimidation. This is quite evident in this account from Doug Osmundson in Northern California:

> This was summer, 1977, and I lived in Arcata, California working as a volunteer botanist for Six Rivers National Forest. I was helping a graduate student at Humboldt State University with his Master's Project, studying wildlife and plants associated with freshwater ponds in the forest near Willow Creek. One weekend, my girlfriend and I drove up the Salmon River to go backpacking in the Marble Mountains. Near Sawyer's Bar we followed a dirt road up the North Fork of the Salmon. It dead-ended at a trailhead leading into the southern end of the Marble Mountain Wilderness Area.
>
> It was dusk. We donned our packs and went up the trail as far as we could before it got completely dark. There were no obvious campsites so we rolled out our bags and literally slept in the middle of the trail.

It's old growth forest and we felt pretty alone. The next morning we got hiking again, following the North Fork up a long forested valley. We passed one other couple that day that stopped to swim and set up camp.

We hiked on, another four miles, and the trail left the river. It snaked up along the side of the canyon and became more of a narrow path. Always the dirt beneath our feet was covered with the prints of bears. There were no human shoe prints, just bear prints. It was getting late again and the topo map indicated that a stream would cross the trail some distance ahead. We pressed on, figuring to set up camp there. We soon heard water. At the crossing we were very tired and were ready to drop our packs, but we both had a very uneasy feeling about the spot and we agreed that we couldn't spend the night there.

Consulting the map again, we found that the trail branched a little ways ahead. An un-maintained, primitive path headed up the mountain to a small sub-alpine lake that we had earlier planned as our destination. The map showed the creek to cross the primitive trail shortly after the path left the main trail. We figured the trail junction might be a good place to camp. It would be close to the creek but hopefully without the feeling we experienced here.

Soon we got there and found a small open area between the trees just off the trail, level and large enough for our sleeping bags and a fire. We dropped our stuff and then went down the primitive trail to the creek (20-30 yards). It was in a steep, boulder-choked, densely forested draw full of logjams from spring or winter torrents.

It was barely a creek now in mid-summer. It was getting dark and again we had a bad feeling about being down in the creek bed. We hurriedly filled our cooking pots with water and got back up to our packs. We were tired. After cooking, I remember arranging our pots and pans along a log on one side of us and the fire on the other side. I hoped that if a bear entered

camp during the night, it might knock the pots off the log and thereby wake us up.

Sometime in the middle of the night (I had no watch, but the fire was completely burned down to ashes and coals) I awoke to a terrible racket going on down in the streambed below us. It was the sound of logs and large rocks being hurled and crashing into things. I sat up in the dark and listened. I shook my girlfriend and told her to wake up. She at first buried her head in her bag and didn't want to hear the sounds.

I was really scared. It was totally dark, I knew there was no one around for miles, and I also knew that bears do not go rampaging around throwing things. I also knew darn well that anything living out there could probably smell the remains of our fire. Whatever it was, it was clearly spending a lot of energy either trying to scare us or to angrily search for something in one of the logjams. After listening for maybe 10-20 minutes (it's really hard to know how long) my worst fears were realized. The crashing sounds stopped and soon there was the sound of footsteps coming up the slope directly toward us. It was on two feet and they were clearly audible, heavy footsteps.

By this time my girlfriend was wide awake and sitting up in her bag, like me, listening. Although neither of us said it, we both were thinking of what it could be. With the footsteps came the sound of labored breath. Whatever it had been up to in the streambed clearly had been hard work. I had a sheath knife, but standing to fight seemed out of the question. It was dark, this thing was big, and I was petrified.

Just as it came up behind the trees immediately surrounding us, I flicked on my little flashlight, hoping to keep it at bay with the light. The light did not penetrate the darkness beyond the nearest trunks. The creature stopped just behind the nearest tree trunk (15 feet away) and just stood there breathing. The sound of the breathing was at least seven feet up in the air.

I yelled "Hey!" with as loud a voice as my adrenalin could muster.

The breathing paused momentarily and the creature made a "humph!" like sound in response, not to me directly, but more to itself. It was very careful to not reveal itself and used the tree to avoid my light striking him. After this, it turned and walked through the brush and trees directly away from us, not back toward the creek but parallel with the creek, heading downstream. The stride was unhurried. We quickly built the fire back up and stayed awake until dawn. After the sun came up we got some sleep.

After breaking camp we dropped down to the creek before heading up the path on the other side. I looked around briefly to see if I could see what the creature had been doing, footprints, etc., but I found nothing. I wish now I had gone down or upstream a bit, since the sounds may not have originated at the crossing like I assumed at the time.

We got up to Lake of the Isle (kind of a shallow cirque lake, as I recall) in the afternoon. There were some old campsites there but no recent evidence of people. The place was scoured of firewood. I spent a lot of time hauling wood up the hill so we would have enough to last all night. I also stockpiled throwing-size rocks. That night we couldn't sleep. We would hear rustling in the brush near camp. I would throw rocks in the direction of the sounds (probably raccoons or black bears) and build up the fire some more. We did that all night, until dawn. We finally got some sleep. When we awoke we both decided to bag it and hike out. We packed our packs and hiked all day. The last mile or so to the car we hiked in late dusk. The thought of spending another night out there was out of the question. We were so paranoid by this time that we jogged the last half-mile to the car.

That's it for the incident. Although we did not actually see the creature, neither of us have any doubt as to what it was. Up until that point in my life, Bigfoot stories were like the Loch

Ness Monster: something intriguing that you sort of wanted to believe in, but could never be sure about. For me, the matter of Bigfoot's existence was resolved that night 25 years ago.

Chris Berg of Yakima, Washington has provided me with one of the most amusing events ever, though I don't think Chris was very amused at the time. The events described by the last witness are frightening enough, but this next saga is enough to cause a person to return their camping gear to the nearest Eddie Bauer store:

The incident began after some brutal but unsuccessful elk hunting on the Bethal Ridge above Oak Creek. We are both locals and know the mountain better than most. We decided to head over to the Cowiche where I had tagged a nice young bull the year before. The area supports a fair local herd and is extremely rugged. We had access to an area through a friend that owned some property and lived a very primitive lifestyle up there. Frank is his name, and being a little eccentric, his tales of bigfoot and not being caught on Divide Ridge after dark were scoffed at by myself and hunting partner Justin. Anyway, we headed straight up the ridge in my hunting rig in late afternoon to pitch camp.

I am an avid extreme hunter and outdoorsman as is my companion on this trip. We have hunted together for many years through all sorts of terrain and conditions, and have developed a certain uncanny sense for each other and the mountain. We encountered three other rigs coming back down as the sun was setting. They were driving at a high rate of speed. I knew one of the guys. He's a logger up there, and he stopped to warn us of the Divide Ridge after dark deal. I said, "Thanks, see ya," and he proceeded back down the mountain, fast. Justin commented about them being a bunch of wimps.

We found an OK site to spend the night. Weather was coming in, so we picked the heavily wooded, very dense north slope to put out our bedrolls. The place had an eerie feel to it

and I dismissed it as being in my head. We were gathering wood by flashlight for a fire when we both stopped and simultaneously looked at each other.

"You smell that?"

"Yeah. It's probably a cougar kill."

It was a very strong, rancid, odor. Not like rotting meat decay; just a putrid smell. We got a fire going and I put on a pot of venison chili. Justin started building the fire bigger and bigger. This was uncommon for him. I asked him why.

He stated, "Something ain't right up here tonight."

I said, "I agree."

We both know fear feeds on fear, and dismissed it as that. Then we heard the first whistle/howl. The first one was distant and we could hear it clearly due to no wind and the cold.

When elk call each other, people not familiar with wapiti can misinterpret these calls as whistles. This was no elk. Justin got out his cow elk call and responded with a short set of chirps. I got out my Weatherby and .44 Magnum. Something was not right. There was no initial response to Justin's cow calls. I put some more wood on the fire. Then came the second shrill howl, in the creek bottom right below us. It was loud and like nothing else we have ever heard and believe me when I tell you we have hunted every manner of "known" species in these mountains. My hair was literally standing on end.

Justin said, "We're outta here right now! Cover me. I'm pitching camp."

He started packing tarps and gear, while I sat, listening, watching, and heavily armed. Justin is one of the most fearless men I have ever met. He was white with fear. Next thing

we heard was the sound of feet walking in the snow with very loud crunching.

Justin just about knocked me over getting to my rifle. The scary part is, we have crashed enough hoofed ungulates through the woods to know the sound of four legs crunching snow. This was very deliberate walking, not crashing or running.

I screamed out, "We are locked and loaded. Whoever is out there is to come into the light!"

The crunching snow stopped.

Justin and I are both very seasoned and responsible hunters and probably the last ones to shoot at noises in the dark, but this had gone far beyond that. There was something standing out there in the dark, large and not scared of us.

This silent standoff went on for about two minutes. We could see nothing outside the light of the fire and lanterns. This creature was close enough that we could hear it walking in the snow, so we knew it was still there, but there was no smell. I called out one more time and we fired one shot from my pistol into the air.

Then all hell broke lose! There was a loud short grunt and running feet crunching in the snow, and we started firing, reloading, and firing some more. We did not stop shooting till we were loaded and well on our way.

After a harrowing drive off the mountain at night in the snow, which I do not recommend even to experienced drivers, we made it back to my ranch. My wife took one look at us and knew something was truly wrong. Justin refused to talk the whole drive off the mountain. And, to this day, he refuses to talk about it. I have no desire to go back up Divide Ridge to investigate. It is 3:00 A.M. and I'm writing this after I was awakened again by this same incident.

Make no mistake. This incident has changed my perspective. I am still an avid hunter, but I stick to Bethal Ridge. I would encourage anyone interested in this to spend some time on Divide Ridge.

Good luck.

It is clear that Chris Berg did not see any humor in the incident, but it is amusing nonetheless to suppose that the sasquatches who perpetrated this marvelously effective bit of intimidation were laughing among themselves and trading "high fives" as Chris' truck sped off down the road toward the safety of Yakima.

Speaking of which, Yakima and Divide Ridge are less than a hundred miles from Goldendale. The type of intimidation that Chris and Justin experienced is so similar to that which Shane Varner reported that I suspect it was the same sasquatch. The incidents are remarkably similar and the geographical separation between these incidents is not very great. Fifty-five miles as the crow flies, straight across the Yakima Indian Reservation, is all the distance that separates these two Class B sightings. That may be as little as a one night's walk for a sasquatch.

In any case, these three situations are unique only in the unusually suspenseful and articulate way they were described by the witnesses. Once you've heard or read similar situations described enough times, never with any serious injury or human fatality occurring, it becomes very clear that:

a) No one who can write that well would put themselves in the middle of a story that made themselves look that vulnerable and helpless if it were not utterly true.
b) It would be very difficult to come up with that kind of fiction and have it match other accounts that originated from other sources.
c) The bigfoot is trying to repel the intruder, not to injure or kill them.

Others suggest that the human intruder is being "sized up." That is, they are being assessed as to their intentions and the degree of threat represented by the individual. If this is so, then it is under-

standable that a couple of well-armed hunters would be seen as an intolerable presence. But why go to all the trouble of terrifying two benign hikers?

I favor another interpretation. I think bigfoots practice and develop their repertoire of intimidating actions just to stay sharp. They may also be showing the ropes to the youngsters. ("Watch this. I'll have these hikers out of here in less than thirty minutes.")

Or, they may be having fun at the expense of some unsuspecting sportsmen. Maybe the sasquatch caught a whiff of that yummy chili that Justin was heating up and was hoping he could frighten them off so quickly that they would leave the chili behind. All of these may be troubling assertions for the scientifically-minded bigfoot investigator. They all imply mental and physical capabilities on the part of the bigfoots that are not often found in the animal kingdom. Even humans have a tough time sizing up enemies in the dark. Intimidating armed hunters without using one's own firepower would be a difficult and dangerous matter for a person. Bigfoots, on the other hand, seem to be quite good at it. This realization makes it much tougher to assume that we are dealing with just another ordinary animal. Even the simplest explanation, that the bigfoot is just trying to get the humans to go away, is complicated by the smell, the sounds and the palpable "vibe" that is always perceived, and which we humans do not know how to generate.

It would be simpler if we could dismiss the above observations, especially the "vibe," as the product of the witness' imagination. This is attractively simple, but this particular type of observation is so prevalent among witnesses, and indeed so palpable to those who experience it, that it cannot be so easily dismissed as imaginary.

Vaughn Hughes, a computer engineer and BFRO colleague of mine is pursuing the possibility that infrasound is the mechanism by which sasquatches generate feelings of trepidation in witnesses. Vaughn offers this information:

> It is now well documented that quite a number of land mammals are capable of emitting infrasound—sounds too low for us humans to hear—at loud volumes. These animals include elephants, giraffes, okapi, rhinos, tigers, lions, etc. Infrasound may be used by tigers to temporarily paralyze their prey. Reminds me very much of Orey Iness' description of being

completely and physically unable to raise his arm that was carrying the camera in his first face to face encounter with a sasquatch. Ron Moorhead, another experienced field man, has reported a similar experience.

NASA and others have documented that certain frequencies of infrasound (in the 8-70 Hz range) cause blurred vision in humans. Infrasound has been demonstrated to cause a host of other reactions in humans which are paralleled in bigfoot encounters: "hair standing on end," "terrified," "uneasiness," "oppressive feel," "dizziness," "sensations of fear," "increased muscle tension," and "very strong sense of presence as if one was intruding, disturbing something, a strange chill to the atmosphere."

Dr. Benson, the bio-accoustician who was in the "Legend Meets Science" show, has noted that characteristics of infrasound occur in Ron & Al's bigfoot recordings (Chapter Twelve).

Other interesting characteristics of communication made in this range of frequencies are that:

1) It can carry over very large distances (upwards of ten miles is documented in elephants),
2) It travels best at night, and its volume is not diminished in dense vegetation.

Vaughn Hughes

Another researcher, Mike Phillips, did an impressive job of trying to assimilate all the information pertinent to this phenomenon that could be gleaned from the sighting reports posted on the BFRO website. Mike submits these findings:

We have recently learned that elephants communicate over long distances by the use of infrasound, (low sound waves travel farther than high ones.) and some of the BFRO reports speak of hearing the sasquatch "rumble" or being able to feel

the vibrations of a very deep vocalization. Like elephants, sasquatches live in widely separated groups and might have developed infrasound as a means of keeping in touch with each other. Another potential value of sasquatch infrasound is that it also has the effect of keeping other creatures away. I have found 114 reports so far that mention a feeling of being watched, or a sudden panic, and 30 more which testify that there were no small animals or birds in the area where bigfoot was encountered. I think it is reasonable to suppose that these phenomena were caused by sasquatch vocalizations that are inaudible to humans.

One of the recipients of my e-mails is a retired Naval Commander who was also an ordnance expert. When I started talking about the "feeling of being watched" and the fear that people experienced, he responded by telling me about non-lethal weapons that the military is hoping to use as a means of crowd control. It's a type of infrasound that makes humans feel very disoriented and edgy. He also said that an organ technician once told him that they try to make sure that church organs do not emit such a tone because it would send every one home real quick.

Interestingly enough, the military is also working on a very bad smell that they hope will clear an area of rioters etc. Looks like maybe bigfoots beat them to that idea, too.

Mike Phillips and Vaughn Hughes make a persuasive case for the view that infrasound is the mechanism by which bigfoots generate intimidating vibes. I look forward to testing some of Vaughn's ideas by attempting to detect infrasound frequencies at forest locations with persistent bigfoot activity.

I recently worked as a teacher on a summer assignment with the U.S. Forest Service on a remote wildlife camera project. I was teaching a wildlife biologist how to deploy the remote camera units. We were using baited camera sets to document fisher, marten, and wolverine activity in the Mt. Hood National Forest. Ann (not her real name) related a story to me one day during our lunch break that she confessed to be the most bewildering experience she has ever experi-

enced in the woods. She offered the usual caveats to the effect that she has seen bear, cougar, and other potentially menacing creatures in the wild while she was alone and in the process of doing the surveys that are part of her job. None of those encounters left her feeling ill at ease. As soon as she said that much, I knew this was going to be good.

On this particular day she was doing a survey for some species or another in the upper reaches of Oregon's Clackamas River drainage. Ann entered a fairly nondescript patch of woods where she began to find large piles of feces, which she assumed to be bear. The feces, or scat, were very conspicuously placed, some of it being left squarely in the middle of the dirt road she was traveling.

Then it began to happen. With every step into the woods Ann began to feel a bit more ill at ease. Admirably, she persevered in the face of some sort of vague adversity. But things got worse. The hair was soon standing up on the nape of her neck, and the feelings of foreboding got so intense that she was virtually in tears. About that time, a flock of ravens squawked then flew from a specific place in the woods.

It doesn't take an experienced professional field biologist to know what that means: that there was a presence in that particular stand of trees to which the birds were reacting. She could not see what it was, but now she knew where it was and that there certainly was something there that disturbed the birds.

By this time, the feelings of foreboding had changed to terror, and all she was sure of is that she absolutely HAD to do an "about face" and leave the area. It was like nothing she had ever experienced before or since. Ann asked me what I thought it was, and I told her that I did not know for sure, but that it fit the pattern of a sasquatch encounter to a tee. Inwardly, I wondered why a sasquatch would decide to intimidate a single, unarmed, female forester. It seemed a bit cruel but it may be that the only plausible explanations lie in a degree of randomness. Sasquatches may see dozens of people come and go, and then, out of the blue, they decide it is time to hassle somebody.

The experience left Ann completely frightened and bewildered. The following week, despite her lingering feelings of trepidation, she decided that she had to resolve the mystery. She returned to the same site to finish the survey. To her surprise, nothing out of the ordinary was seen or felt. Everything was as normal and routine as

it ever was. There was not a hint of the overpowering intimidation that was so palpable and so frightening that the only one course of action that she could consider was a "full retreat."

But there may be another solution. What if Linda Boydston's suggestion that we need to feed the sasquatches was not as much of a joke as it sounded? What if the creature in each of these situations was quite simply hungry? What if the sasquatch in the Chris Berg chronicle was more interested in Justin's venison chili than in the hunters themselves? What if the Shane's pick-up really was emptied by a sasquatch who was tired of beef and was hoping to find a candy bar? What if the Marble Mountain sasquatch was hoping to separate the campers from some of their trail food?

This does not have to mean the sasquatches are starving in the wilderness and incapable of feeding themselves. It just means that they are well aware of the fact that we humans are in possession of some very tasty morsels that we often drop as we are fleeing in terror.

The best defense then, to sasquatch intimidation, is to swallow your fear and present them with some food, preferably left at the margins of the camp. Leaving a simple food offering serves at least three purposes:

1) It recognizes the possibility that the creature might be hungry, especially if we offer it one of the tastier items in our camp. It need not be gourmet. I have had great success with peanut butter and honey sandwiches.
2) It is a way of sending a message, and that message is, "We know you are there, and we are OK with you being there."
3) It is a deferential move, which is to say, "You're the boss. We recognize your power. Want a snack?"

I keep coming back to Justin's venison chili, which sounds mighty good to me. It may not be a coincidence that Chris and Justin's problems began when they started to warm up the chili. They already had indications that a sasquatch was around and they may have missed an opportunity to "soothe the savage beast" by leaving about half of their supply of chili in a pot just outside of camp.

It may not always be an option, but my advice to anyone who is faced with the same kind of intimidation in the woods, is to be prepared to try and make an offering. It's a simple thing to do, it can be

an interesting experiment, and there is nothing to lose. I would not suggest leaving food around when bears are a bigger concern than sasquatches, but if one had the suspicion that it was a sasquatch that was causing some commotion, then bears are of no particular concern. I learned from Allen and April (Chapter 5) that when the bigfoots are around, there is no concern whatsoever with the usual bad actors around a camp, namely cougars and bears.

It may well be the case that the sasquatch in the Marble Mountain event was doing the campers a valuable service. They were seeing bear tracks as they hiked and they may have been destined to have wildlife problems that night of one sort or another. The noise that the sasquatch made in the creek may have been intended for a mischievous bear that was about to make its presence known. Sasquatches have been known to defend the position of vulnerable humans as discussed in Chapter 8. If this were the case in the Marble Mountain account, then the backpackers may have owed the sasquatch a reward for discouraging bears around their camp.

Perhaps the Marble Mountain backpackers owed a favor to the sasquatch who kept the bears away. The bigfoot just wasn't very tactful about the way it handed them the bill for defending their camp. Instead, the sasquatch's approach to their camp came off as being a bit rude. It may all boil down to a simple problem of miscommunication.

Doug Osmondson, the backpacker who sent in the Marble Mountain chronicle is a career scientist who studies rare and endangered fish. Doug read this chapter describing his experiences of twenty-five years ago and offered this cogent reaction, as only a veteran scientist could:

> The facts suggest that the sasquatch knew we were present and made a lot of unnecessary noise, likely to scare us. However, there are some inconsistencies. Why spend over 20 minutes wearing itself out in an attempt to scare us when other more easy means were at its disposal? If the commotion was designed to scare us, I seriously doubt it was for our food. I also do not agree with your suggestion that it was protecting us from bears. It could have done this more easily by quietly posting itself just outside our camping area for the night. I'm sure its presence would have kept any

bears away. Your suggestion of leaving offerings of food is a good one, but like you said, it could aggravate potential problems with other types of wildlife. Also, unless you are a BFRO researcher actively seeking out encounters, most encounters involving ordinary campers like me are going to be un-looked-for, once-in-a-lifetime events. Hence, leaving food offerings for sasquatch is not something most people would contemplate.

-Doug Osmundson

The same may have been true for the Chris Berg's chronicle. The sasquatch that they encountered *might* have been hoping for a hand-out. If I smelled venison chili, I know I would. Knowing what I know now, I'd be the first one to offer to share my dinner with the obstreperous locals. But like Doug said, offering food to a sasquatch is not something most people would contemplate. Well put, Doug.

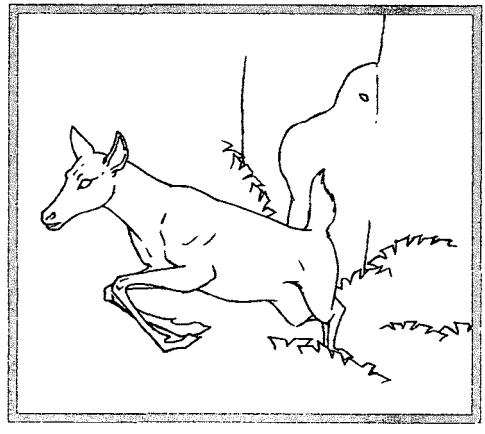
If I ever find myself in a similar situation, and I hope I am someday, I plan to maintain the presence of mind to try an offering of something equivalent to Justin's chili. Easier said than done, I know. The hardest part will begin with a deep breath and a walk toward the source of the intimidation, carrying the bowl of chili. I can't wait to see what happens, or if I have the guts to actually do it.

Autumn Williams, a sasquatch researcher of considerable reputation, has one more suggestion to someone who finds themselves embroiled in a sasquatch intimidation scenario: Don't blink. The intimidation stops as soon as you let them know that you aren't intimidated.

OK...I like the sound of that but I'm not sure I'm a good enough actor to pull that one off. Again, the cliché that comes to mind is: "Easier said than done." Personally, I plan to have something handy like Justin's chili, just in case the way to a sasquatch's heart is through its stomach.

chapter four

Easy Pickin's



When a mythical animal is hanging around the homestead, scaring people and causing problems, who ya gonna call? BFRO got the call in January of 2000. A family or rural Oklahomans were near the end of their rope when they sent in a sighting report with pleas for help:

> "Too many incidents to mention here. Please have someone contact us. This is no hoax and my brother is afraid for his family. This creature is getting bolder every time it returns. This thing is huge, walks upright, and smells like combination of musky urine and burned hair. It repeatedly comes back in the early morning hours after midnight and harasses them until just before dawn. It has, on more than one occasion, tried to enter their home. We don't know where to turn. Everyone thinks we are crazy when we mention it. Please, we don't know what to do. I do know that something needs to be done! There are stories we could tell that would make the hair stand on your neck..."

Most people think of Oklahoma as one wide open plain that extends from Arkansas to Texas. The southeast corner of Oklahoma is not that way at all. It has the mountainous look and feel of Arkansas. The Ouchita (WAH-she-taw) National Forest straddles the border between these two states. It is the largest tract of federal forestland in the south central U.S. and it encompasses most of the Ouchita Mountains, a deciduous forest that blankets a range of low mountains rising above swampy bottomlands. The Little River drains this steep topography, carrying the runoff into Arkansas to a confluence with the Red River at Fulton.

The besieged residents lived in rural LeFlore County, which is in the heart of this isolated corner of Oklahoma. They were claiming problems (to put it mildly) over the past two years with recurring sasquatch visitations. Such far-fetched claims are nothing new for those who monitor the traffic of reports that are received by a bigfoot website. Most wild claims don't pan out, but someone tries to follow up on each and every report and claim, since some of the strangest reports have not been so easy to dismiss as the stuff of cranks. This report turned out to be one such situation. A witness was reached by phone. He insisted that they were not kidding around. At least one bigfoot was prowling around the homestead, coming onto the porch, and messing with a window as if it wanted to get into the house. It also seemed to be stealing things like deer meat out of a freezer that was kept in an open-sided outbuilding on the property. A metal gate next to the house was crumpled in a manner suggesting a force that was applied by a giant hand.

The wife was too fearful to remain in the house. She and the kids were relocated temporarily while the men armed themselves with assault rifles and prepared to defend the homestead against the encroaching bigfoots. Matt, the BFRO director, scrambled to assemble a team of investigators. It was just the kind of situation that a bigfoot researcher dreams about, although there is an important difference between dreaming about it and being truly prepared for it. Another BFRO investigator and airline pilot from Ohio named Miles Lawler had two layover days so he offered to visit the scene and attempt to determine first hand whether there was anything to this list of incredible claims.

Meanwhile, things were still happening at the site. The resident and his brother were now maintaining a nightly, armed vigil at the homestead. If they saw the glint of eyeshine in the thickets around the house, they opened fire. They reported to the BFRO that they might have hit a bigfoot with rifle fire. By the light of day they found a trail of blood that led into the woods. A dead deer was also found nearby, which confused the question of whose blood was found all over the ground. Miles would hopefully collect some of the blood that was left in wake of the previous night's shooting spree. Winter weather was threatening a downpour. This added further urgency to the preparations by BFRO to visit the site. Miles would have to hurry if he was going to collect a blood sample before the rain washed it away.

As Miles traveled to Oklahoma, the BFRO director tried to make contact with the residents and confirm the key elements of the story. He was able to reach Fred Lewis (real name on file) and attempt to verify some of the details. Fred was sure that it was a bigfoot that he shot at and, based on the blood, he felt he hit it. He estimated that it was about seventy yards away and it was dark when he shot at it. According to Fred, there was a lot of blood forming a trail off into the woods, starting from the approximate place where the creature was standing when he shot at it. Fred said that the bigfoot ran after he shot at it. He and his brother could hear it and others on the hillside for several hours after the shooting. But then there was the dead deer. In light of the dead deer and the noises the residents heard after the shooting, Matt was more guarded in his assessment of the situation. He supposed that Fred didn't wound or even hit a bigfoot. More likely, Fred shot a deer and all the blood was from that deer.

Meanwhile, Miles and two other guys were headed for the scene. BFRO investigator Roger Roberts and his father-in-law were available to make the journey at their own expense. They would join Miles in Tulsa and ride together to the site. Roger's father-in-law was accompanying the investigators because the residents specifically requested one experienced hunter in the mix. Now, Matt was able to offer the necessary reassurances that his team was up to the job. The residents wanted the cavalry and since Matt was eager to get his foot in the door on this situation, he may have slightly overstated the hunter/killer capabilities of the group he was sending. Truth be told, Roger's dad, the only hunter in the group, was seventy-two years old, and although he had done some bear hunting, he didn't actually have any confirmed bear kills to his credit. He might have shot one once, though.

Roger Roberts, on the other hand, was all you could ask for in a bigfoot investigator. By trade, he was a private investigator in Oklahoma. He had been in military intelligence in Vietnam, then a police officer for many years in Oklahoma before becoming a private investigator. He was on a first name basis with law enforcement officials throughout Oklahoma and is very familiar with every jurisdiction.

Roger chuckled when Matt asked him why Fred would call the BFRO instead of the police. The location was not inside an incorporated town, so there were no police. Law enforcement would be taken

care of by the LeFlore county sheriff. Roger said there weren't very many sheriff deputies in that particular area because there's a lot of weed growing in southern Oklahoma, and the federal government routinely does unannounced sweeps to arrests crooked deputies. Roger felt that there might not *be* a lot of law enforcement presence in that area as a consequence. In any case, it was Roger's view that rural Oklahomans prefer to avoid anything to do with the sheriff's department if they can help it. Not only did Roger feel that this mentality was particularly the norm for southeastern Oklahoma, but it was firmly rooted over generations. No one felt that Fred was involved in moonshining or pot growing, but at least there was reasonable justification for why a rural fellow preferred to turn to unofficial channels to solve his primate pest problems.

When Fred Lewis was looking for a bigfoot group to help him with his problem, he may have chosen the BFRO because they have a serious, scientific look to their website. Maybe the fancy website led Fred to develop some unrealistic expectations about what the BFRO was capable of providing by way of assistance. Fred wanted commandos. A SWAT team. Matt didn't want to burst his bubble, but all that he could scrape together at no cost and on short notice was an airline pilot, an experienced private eye, and his seventy-two-year old dad who may have once shot a bear. Not exactly the cavalry, but "free" is a very good price.

Matt was sending the only group of volunteers he was able to cobble together on short notice in response to a situation that was completely unverified. He knew good and well that the BFRO team was not going to hit the ground with guns blazing. Too many unexplored possibilities existed and the credibility of the residents was one of them. Miles and crew could face a manslaughter charge if they joined in a midnight shooting spree only to discover that the nocturnal visitor was a practical-joking neighbor or a prowler. The BFRO team's first mission was to attempt to verify the extraordinary claims of the residents. If that was accomplished, then, regardless of what the resident had in mind, the BFRO plan was to try for some sound recordings and some video. Matt doubted that the blood was from a bigfoot so no detailed preparations were made to collect blood from the site. Nor did the BFRO people have any intention of shooting anything, and who can blame them? Heaven forbid there is a bigfoot group somewhere who is poised at the ready with large

caliber weapons in the event that someone e-mails them with claims of a malevolent bigfoot that needed exterminating. Talk about a menace to public safety.

Fred was in no position to be picky. He wasn't offering to pay mercenary soldiers. He just wanted the bigfoots to scram. He didn't care what it took to solve the problem and the idea of killing pesky bigfoots was perfectly acceptable to a rural guy who was used to dispatching troublesome varmints of all kinds with lethal force when the situation called for it. Fred was certainly intelligent enough to understand that these creatures were no ordinary varmint, and if any creature killing took place, someone ought to be in possession of some extraordinarily valuable remains. Further, Fred seemed pretty confident of the fact that he already *had* shot one, and the blood of that creature was lying on the ground for the taking. Matt instructed Fred to leave the blood alone. The BFRO team would handle everything when they got there.

The residents wanted further reassurance and Matt told them that the bear hunter would shoot it if there was no other way to handle it, but to let the BFRO team handle it in any case. Matt had been through a similar situation a year earlier and from that experience he found out one important thing: tranquilizing a bigfoot creature is not a viable option. Tranquilizing any wild animal is complicated, and particularly difficult to arrange on short notice.

Tranquilizing is often suggested as an easy way to collect bigfoot tissue in a non-lethal manner. It's not easy. The most commonly used animal tranquilizer is pencyclapine (PCP). The dose is determined by the weight and the metabolism of the target animal. It is a powerful and fast-acting tranquilizer but it can be lethal to the animal subject if the dose is a little too strong. If the dose was too low, the animal will not be knocked out. It will be drugged and disoriented but it will still be conscious and mobile, making it even more dangerous and unpredictable than it was before. Or it may travel a good distance and then lose consciousness, go into shock, and die somewhere else without anyone ever catching up with it. Only a licensed veterinarian is allowed to calculate and dispense the dose of PCP that is used for an animal tranquilizing effort. PCP is not legally available since it has been popular in the past as a recreational drug.

Remember also that tranquilizers are not as simple to administer

as most people think. Tranquilizer darts do not travel very far and they must be delivered to a fleshy spot, like the rump, of the target animal. When dealing with large and dangerous animals, tranquilizer darts are generally fired from the safety of an aircraft or a big vehicle so the person who fires the tranquilizer does not incur the wrath of the creature they just shot in the rump with a dart. The animal is observed from afar until it finally drops. A team immediately descends on the animal and checks the vital signs in the event that the dose is too strong and the animal's life is imperiled. Drugs can be administered to counteract the PCP if necessary.

None of these standard procedures translate very well to a bigfoot tranquilizing plan. The average weight and metabolism of a bigfoot is completely unknown. Approaching a bigfoot from a helicopter is unlikely in the extreme, even if they didn't reside in heavily forested mountains, which they do. Locating one, hitting it successfully, following it until it lost consciousness, and getting the dose right, are all absurdly remote possibilities.

Bottom line: Forget about tranquilizing a bigfoot. It is something that is suggested by people who have watched it done on televised wildlife documentaries. Dr. Krantz knew this, which is why he argued that killing one is the only practical alternative. Matt certainly was not advocating any such thing in the LeFlore County situation, but he seemed resigned to the possibility that the residents might just do it anyway. He observed, "We have always known that, in the natural course of things, there would someday be an overly aggressive bigfoot that would get itself killed by someone protecting his family/property. This may be the one, inevitably."

The next day, Matt phoned the homestead shortly after Miles and crew arrived on the scene. As they were setting up, Matt spoke with Fred's wife. She confessed that they were quite frightened of the creature but she insisted that they were not being hasty in their conclusion that it was a bigfoot that was terrorizing the homestead. Far from it, she offered that they had denied the whole thing for years. Eventually things got too strange to ignore.

They were in the habit of storing deer meat in a chest freezer. The freezer was in an open-sided outbuilding. Quartered deer sections began to disappear from the freezer. Eventually, three entire frozen deer disappeared from the freezer. After that, the mysterious visitor began coming onto the porch. It tore off some of the window trim.

The residents were convinced it was trying to get into the house. That's when they got really freaked out and decided to fight back with rifle fire.

Then the dead deer was found. The resident insisted it showed no sign of being shot. One of its legs had been violently twisted and broken and all of the internal organs were missing. The only opening to the body cavity was a hole between the neck and the rib cage. The hole was large enough for the predator to reach in and remove the organs. There was no sign of scuff marks on the ground around the deer. It appeared as though the deer had been carried in from elsewhere and deposited where it was found.

Fred's wife also described loud vocalizations that were heard with increasing frequency. The sounds included chattering, hollering, whistling, and the thrashing of trees. The night before they found the dead deer was particularly noisy.

Twelve hours later, Matt called for an update on the situation, but the timing of his call was a bit inconvenient for the residents. Fred and his brother were busy shooting at bigfoots from the porch. Miles and Roger were watching but not joining in. Roger's dad had been sleeping in the car but he came into the house once the shooting started. By this time it was the middle of the night and also pouring rain. The rain had moved in before anyone had managed to collect a sample of the much-discussed blood that was found after the previous night's shooting spree. Now the bigfoots had apparently returned.

Miles got on the phone and told Matt that both he and Roger were sometimes seeing what Fred and his brother were describing. Pairs of eyes were occasionally visible moving in the brush on the edge of the surrounding forest. Miles put Roger on the phone and Matt asked him if it was possible that these guys are just freaked out and shooting at raccoons in trees.

Roger replied, "No. This is serious business. They've definitely got a problem here."

Matt called back a while later and was only able to talk for a few seconds. Miles last words to Matt were, "It's pretty much "shoot to kill" here at the moment."

The next morning, Matt called back again. The shooting spree of the night before was now over. There were no dead bigfoots or new pools of blood to show for the night's work, but the situation was gradually becoming clearer. Fred, the resident, lived on thirty acres of

hilly and partially forested terrain. He planted Austrian peas all over his property, especially near the house, because the deer feed on them, particularly in the winter, when other types of deer browse are in short supply. The deer go crazy for the Austrian peas and it makes it much easier to hunt them.

Lots of deer congregate on Fred's property and for a few years now he has been bagging the deer for the meat. On occasion, Fred and his brother noticed that something big was snatching away the deer that they shot before they had time to round up their kill. In other cases, frozen deer quarters were disappearing from a chest freezer. It was after the deer vanished from the freezer that they heard what sounded like the creature trying to get into the window. Fred would suit up and run out after the intruder but he never got a look at it until just the other night when he felt he shot it.

That was just a few days after he sent his first e-mail to the BFRO. By then he and his brother already sent the wife and kids to stay with relatives. Then they spent nights at the homestead with assault rifles and a spotlight at the ready. When they saw the red eyeshine in the woods, they opened fire. Less than two days later, the BFRO people were on the scene to witness the spectacle. The most baffling question was why the things weren't running away after being shot at. They would just retreat to the trees and move to a different place on the hillside. Their eyes could still be seen reflecting the light of the spotlight that the residents were using.

Over the phone, Matt asked Fred, the resident, if he ever spotlights deer at night from his porch. He did. Then it began to emerge that there was a certain nighttime routine at the homestead that involved spotlighting deer and shooting them. Not a particularly sporting manner of hunting but it kept the family fed. Apparently, it kept the bigfoots fed as well because it seemed that the bigfoots would come around whenever the shooting started. The bigfoots may have become conditioned to expect wounded or frightened deer fleeing up the hill that they could intercept. Or, they might nab the dead deer before the residents had a chance to claim their kill. Either way, it seemed that the deer were easy pickin's for the bigfoots.

The bigfoots may have grown accustomed to this pattern over a period of years. Suddenly, during the last few nights, the pattern changed. The rifle fire was now directed at the bigfoots. To everyone's surprise the bigfoots did not flee. Matt speculated that the big-

foots may not have realized that they, not the deer, were now the targets. It all began to make sense to Fred.

It also became clear to Fred, and everyone involved, that the bigfoots were there to avail themselves of the deer. If Fred wanted to get rid of the bigfoots, he should start by getting rid of the deer, and that meant getting rid of the Austrian peas. No peas, no deer. No deer, no bigfoots. No bigfoots, and everyone gets a good night's sleep for a change.

The question of why this particular homestead was afflicted with uninvited wildmen was now a little less mysterious. But rather than being grateful, Fred was unhappy. The hunter that the BFRO sent was not a serious hunter in Fred's eyes. The other investigators were also too timid for Fred when it came to blasting at eyeshine in the night. They balked at the blood sample because they thought it belonged to the deer. Fred disagreed. He felt that the deer was too small to account for all the blood he found and he saw no evidence that the deer had even been shot. Miles couldn't be sure. By the time he arrived, the deer had been chewed up by other critters. Then the rain came in and washed the blood away. Fred felt the BFRO missed their big chance to get a bigfoot blood sample. The BFRO investigators were not mercenaries and they had to get back to their real jobs. They packed their gear and headed for home.

Once home, Miles summarized the whole matter in this letter:
Curators,

> I met Roger Roberts and his father-in-law in Tulsa and we drove down to the site, arriving shortly before dark Friday afternoon. (Roger is a private eye and was very helpful picking up on details and asking good questions.)
>
> It was quickly beginning to cloud up with very dark ominous looking weather, which probably cheated us out of close to an hour of good daylight. We looked around the scene. The deer was badly eaten up at this point (less than 48 hours had gone by since the kill) mostly by his dogs, I imagine. He had about 15 beagles running loose. There are other predators in the area, but since it was only about 75 yards behind their house, I doubt if it was anything but the dogs that were responsible for the damage. I witnessed them eating on it.

Anyway, it was too far gone to tell anything. The area of the possible bullet hole was all gone, just a skeleton from the hind quarters forward to the upper neck. The witnesses were all very credible and appeared to be honest. It is my opinion that they are truthful and that there is bigfoot activity in the area.

The gate was impressive. It closes against the corner of the house. There were absolutely no signs of scratches or anything that gave the impression that it was faked by clamping in a vise or something. The total area of the bending was approximately 14 inches. There appeared to be three or four spots along the middle of the crease that were the points of contact, like a hand wrapping around it and squeezing. They were each approximately two inches apart, centered in the folded area.

Several friends and neighbors stopped by throughout the evening that had heard about what was going on. When they heard about what was happening, they began to open up and relate stories of their own. For the story telling session, we just let them talk. I can spot a bullshitter and Roger has a lot of experience with questioning and interviewing, and we were both convinced these people were on the level about their experiences. The session went on until about 11 p.m. and since they indicated nothing ever happens until around 1 or 2 a.m., Roger and I went driving around with a spotlight to see if we could spot anything from the roads. It rained all night by the way.

The area around the homestead is remote, heavily forested, and mountainous. I have been all around the country hiking (Pacific Northwest, British Columbia, Alaska, Great Smokey Mountains, etc.) and I was really caught by surprise. No, it is not as rugged and isolated as the Northwest but it is just like the Smokies. It is a perfect spot, with all the protected government land.

Anyway, when we got back, they were all out on the front

porch and they said they had just shot at one across the road. That started the hunt. Basically, we hung around outside until about 4 a.m., in the rain, low 30s, shining lights. The brothers shot at two more "somethings" that I never saw. They described the eyes as "reflecting pinkish red." The term "like a red reflector or tail lights on a car" was used. I did see something a few minutes after the initial sighting that they shot at. It reflected like a red reflector. It was there for just a second in the trees across the road (thick small saplings and brush) around seven or eight feet high. It was definitely there, not the reflection of wet leaves or anything. It looked like a tower light in the distance, but there was no tower over that way.

Anyway, they would see something and shoot, but there would be no scream or sound of anything running away. There were no screams at all, or any definite "animal moving in the brush" sounds all night. Of course, listening was hampered by the sound of the rain on the wet leaves.

The beagles chased rabbits all night, generally unaffected by anything "scary." A couple of the shots were at close range (within 50 yards) and we walked over to investigate. There was nothing there. We would have definitely seen it or heard it run away. The next morning, I did a very thorough sweep of all the suspected areas and no footprints or similar evidence was found. The ground was very soft after 10 hours of rain. I agree completely with Matt's speculation/conclusions about the deer. I believe there is bigfoot activity in the area, just none that night.

-Miles

The residents were expecting some heavily armed commandos from BFRO to come to their rescue. It might be nice if BFRO, or any other group, had the kind of funding, and experience that enabled them to keep a van, packed with all imaginable hardware, centrally located and ready to deploy to the next bigfoot situation. I wonder how much equipment would be even appropriate. Most weaponry and

electronic technology is inappropriate, and possibly even counterproductive, for reasons that will be discussed later.

Just finding a couple people who were willing to put their lives on hold long enough to go down there and consult with the residents at no charge was a generous move, in my view. Obviously, the incentive was the possibility that a bigfoot might be killed, or that blood could be collected and used for a groundbreaking DNA collection effort.

The residents were visibly disappointed when the cavalry that arrived seemed more concerned with electronics than weaponry. The residents were expecting BFRO operatives to exterminate the bigfoots, as if they did that kind of thing all the time. BFRO was interested in gathering good evidence on the existence of bigfoot-style creatures. The residents didn't need any more evidence. They KNEW what they were dealing with and they just wanted the problem eliminated so they could get a good night's sleep.

As with any small town situation, word then got out about what was happening. Not only did everyone seem to know what was going on, but the location was now under surveillance by the state fish and game commission. The residents could no longer do "hunting" off the back porch, or shoot fairly indiscriminately into the night. They were eventually convinced to stop trying to shoot the troublesome creatures and to concentrate on getting video and photos of the creatures. With the law now breathing down their neck, the wisdom of this suggestion was undeniable.

Another BFRO member, Sue Lindley was in the area. She camped out in the woods in the same general area and spent a lot of time listening and looking around for indications of bigfoot activity after things settled down at the LeFlore County site. She found a few interesting things but nothing earthshaking. She ended up leaving the area to the locals and moving to Oregon.

Here are a few things that I strongly suspect after careful study of the events at this site. First, The LeFlore County situation illustrated the fact that bigfoots do steal food from rural residences. I learned that bigfoots are clever and capable enough to raid an accessible outdoor freezer. This suggested to me a greater level of cunning and intelligence (not to mention manual dexterity) than I ever realized prior to this. Also, they are not necessarily creatures of deep dark wilderness. They may reside near, or at least visit, rural homesteads in their search for easy pickin's. Food in an outdoor freezer is definitely easy pickin's

for a bigfoot, but not for other wildlife species. Consequently, an outdoor freezer makes a good starting point for baiting experiments involving bigfoots.

The fact that bigfoots prey on deer has been pretty well established. In this particular case, it seems that the bigfoots were aware of the fact that the residents were attracting the deer with plantings of Austrian peas and then shooting the deer for meat. Not only were the bigfoots apparently intercepting the deer before the residents could round up their kill, but the bigfoots, as Matt surmised, came to associate the gunfire with feeding time. When the gunfire was eventually directed at the menacing bigfoots, the residents were surprised to find that the bigfoots retreated only slightly. Perhaps the bigfoots failed to realize that they were suddenly the targets.

Blood was found on the ground after one of the rural defenders felt he hit a bigfoot with rifle fire. Confusion resulted from the fact that a dead deer was found very nearby. Was the blood from the deer or the bigfoot? The blood was never collected so we shall never know. One resident was of the feeling that there was too much blood for the small deer that was found. Strangely, the deer may not have been killed by gunfire. Fred insisted that the internal organs were missing when he found the deer and it was also drained of blood.

In most bigfoots matters there is a lack of good evidence that is seen by the skeptics as clear indication that the entire phenomenon is bogus or imagined. To those who are convinced that the phenomenon is genuine, the lack of clear evidence is frustrating but it also forces them to speculate as to what is suggested by the scant evidence that is found. Here is a good example of a situation that invites speculation, even though it can never be verified. One of the residents felt that the deer was put there by the bigfoots, perhaps as some sort of gift or compensation for the fact that the bigfoots had been stealing from them right along. Perhaps, in the process of leaving a dead deer for their benefactors, a bigfoot was shot. That was one resident's feeling on the matter.

In any event, no dead bigfoots were found so the plan to collect the blood, which was at one time a priority, was never done. In hindsight, this was a mistake. It was assumed that the blood was from the deer. Another lesson learned here was the need to collect anything and everything that may be of value. Let the experts in the lab sort it out. There will always be a wide margin of doubt in the bigfoot evidence

collection game but using that inherent uncertainty as justification for not collecting possible evidence is a big mistake. We may have missed some good evidence because we spent too much time second-guessing the account that was being offered by the witness.

Collecting blood from the ground is an easy enough procedure. Anyone can do it, and bad weather can wash away the evidence long before the first card-carrying investigator arrives on the scene. The big issue in collecting potential DNA evidence is avoiding contamination of the evidence with other living tissue that would contain DNA of its own. Use a sterile glass jar and a sterile collection tool, like a wrapped plastic spoon from McDonald's. It is important to avoid getting excess amounts of dirt or leaves in the sample, which is then placed in a small amount of 70 percent, ethanol solution. Grain alcohol (Everclear) from a liquor store is 90 percent ethanol, so it would be diluted slightly. Once the blood is in a jar with a tightly sealed lid, the blood or tissue will stay well preserved in the alcohol for an indefinite period of time. Hair is picked up with a tweezers and dropped into a clean, never-used Ziploc bag and sealed. It should not be touched, even with a gloved hand, for fear of contamination with human DNA or with artificial fibers from the glove.

No spoor (blood, hair, etc.) was collected at the LeFlore County scene, which is the way these matters usually shake out. While disappointing, something else of potential value was obtained. Observations of bigfoot behavior were gathered and these are important. They help us determine that it was a bigfoot, and they also provide a good indication of bigfoot behavior patterns that may be useful in the future. For example, it was strange that the bigfoots did not leave when the gunfire started but they did leave when the residents were persuaded to abandon weaponry in favor of electronic monitoring. When the microphones and the cameras came out, the bigfoots left. What gives? Coincidence?

This situation triggered a change in my view of the bigfoot phenomenon. I began to wonder whether these creatures might be a whole lot smarter than anything I was previously giving them credit for. This, in turn, suggested a reason why bigfoots have done such a good job of avoiding detection for so long. But surely they could not be so intelligent as to understand that the electronics are being put out to gather evidence about their existence. It seemed too far-fetched to consider this at the time. After conducting more experiments that are

chronicled in the next chapter, my suspicions on this became even stronger.

It is certainly productive to spend some time trying to understand why the bigfoots are favoring a certain location, as Matt did in lengthy phone interviews with the witnesses. His insights and advice, I think, were quite correct. Beyond that, if the goal is to discourage activity, it could be done without dispatching the proverbial panel van of Ghostbuster-style operatives. Add some outdoor lighting. Put out some cameras. Have a few folks hang around with cameras and microphones. Conspicuously search the surroundings for tracks, and then cast them in plaster if they are found. The bigfoots are stealthy and keen observers of human activity and they will quickly figure out that they are being watched or stalked. Once they know this, they will, in all likelihood, leave. They may be back again someday when things cool down a bit, but they will certainly leave for a while.

The LeFlore County situation was the first indication I witnessed that suggests that there was an easy way to get rid of pesky bigfoots. While it seems comical to suppose that certain people somewhere in North America are bothered by creatures that are considered by most to be imaginary, studying this situation and comparing it to others has convinced me that it really does happen. It is very rare, but also very real to those who experience it. And when it does happen, and when the residents just want the situation to end, it appears that the easiest way to accomplish this is not to declare open season on the creatures, but to install a few cameras and start doing some video surveillance.

This is good news for someone whose homestead is afflicted with unwanted bigfoot activity. If cameras and lights don't discourage the bigfoots and they keep hanging around, stealing food from the freezer in the barn, jiggling the door knobs, or whatever, then perhaps some valuable video footage can be obtained. I doubt this will happen. The bigfoots seem to have temporarily left the LeFlore County homestead as soon as attempts were made to study them and to videotape them. It is highly speculative, but after seeing this same thing happen at other sites subsequent to this one, I now feel that this is precisely the case. Bigfoots are camera shy and they are averse to researcher presence. I cannot explain why this is true but a possible pattern has begun to emerge. At the very least, the possibility should not be ignored.

In January of 2003, I was again in contact with Fred Lewis, the

LeFlore County resident. He said the bigfoots had returned. He seemed much more knowledgeable and less threatened by the bigfoot activity now. He knew more about the creatures and he understood the concept of habituating them to human contact. He seemed hopeful that he could accomplish this. He did not want his real name or his location mentioned. Fred plans to someday write a chronicle of his ongoing experiences with the bigfoots. I look forward to reading it.

The freezer raids seemed to suggest some interesting possibilities for further experimentation since the freezer was of such interest to the bigfoots. As it turned out, that idea would be investigated in greater detail very soon.

chapter five

Dance Hall Days

You see some pretty disgusting comments when you see every comment that gets sent to a bigfoot website. On the other hand, lots of polite folks send in serious suggestions that are intended to help capture or photograph a bigfoot. Before video and web cams were the promising tools of sasquatch research, the most frequently submitted suggestion was some sort of bigfoot trap.

Not too many years ago, lots of people had ideas on how to trap or capture a bigfoot. Suggestions ranged from tranquilizer guns to traps disguised as smokehouses, hen houses, horse trailers and even the cartoon cliché deep hole covered with sticks and leaves. Now, technology is in vogue and cameras, especially tiny web cams, are everyone's favorite idea. I thought they were a pretty good idea myself, and I had been trying to find the right place to deploy a camera for more than a year when BFRO got a message in April, 2000 from a rural resident who felt that bigfoots were frequenting the woods around his western Washington homestead.

I responded to his message with "Sincerity Test # 1": I sent him my phone number by e-mail and asked him to call me at a certain time. Pranksters won't spend their own money on a long distance call to an interested bigfoot researcher. This guy did. Allen Hoyt described two good sightings and a lot of "Class B" stuff that had happened to him and his family over the past couple of years. His wife and teenage daughter had a sighting while riding horses on the property. Allen saw one run across the road in front of his car on the long driveway into his house. A few other strange events happened around the homestead that needed explaining. Chickens would disappear from their flocks. A tidy pile of feathers that matched the missing chicken's attire would then show up somewhere in the nearby woods. Rabbits would vanish

from rabbit hutches so regularly that they eventually gave up raising them. Loud nocturnal creature calls were happening "all the time."

Recalling some of the events that were reported by the bigfoot shooters in LeFlore County, Oklahoma (Chapter Four), I asked Allen if they had an outdoor freezer. They did. Had anything disappeared from it recently?

"Why, yes." Allen replied without hesitation. Until that moment, he had not made any connection between the bigfoot sightings they were having and the fact that the freezer door was sometimes found open in the morning. I was pretty pleased with myself for asking such a question, especially considering I had only learned of the connection a few months prior from the LeFlore County deal.

Allen recollected that half of a pig, which was intended for a barbecue, had disappeared from the freezer not too long ago. A big bag of smelt (a small, oily fish) that was kept in the freezer had also disappeared. Previously, Allen had blamed his two teenage boys for leaving the freezer door open though they steadfastly denied doing so. He was at a complete loss to suppose who would steal a dead pig and a load of smelt. Now Allen had an explanation for that mystery and I had a situation that seemed ripe for the camera experiments that I wanted to initiate.

I drove up to meet the family and check out the situation. Allen and April showed me around. They lived at the end of the road and were surrounded by thick woods of alder, cedar, maple and fir. Large stumps told of past logging some thirty years prior. An old railroad right-of-way crossed the property, as did creeks and wetlands. Tunnels and cavities in the stream banks suggested beaver activity past and present. We saw several possible bigfoot tracks, though nothing that was so distinct that I wanted to cast it in plaster. Scuff marks and indistinct tracks were sometimes seen, but seldom if ever did one find a clearly defined track of any animal on such a thick ground cover of sword fern, salal, moss, and duff. The only bare earth to be found was in their horse paddock, the compacted earth of the trails, and the sandbars along the creeks. The best of the possible bigfoot tracks we found was on a trail that crossed a deep but narrow pool in the creek. The creek was wide enough to require a big leap to cross it, and one fairly large barefoot impression was evident in some moss where a foot would land after making the leap to the opposite bank.

We visited the places where sightings had occurred: berry patches and dense stands of plantation timber adjacent to the road. Logging had begun in a mature stand of timber near their property boundary. They feared that the logging might cause the creatures to move on. It was this concern that prompted Allen and April to share their observations with BFRO. Up until the logging began, they had come to enjoy the sasquatch activity. They were people who kept and enjoyed animals of all kinds, both domestic and wild. They kept chickens, rabbits, horses, and dogs. They had several caged tropical birds in the house. They often rehabilitated wounded wildlife. Their teenaged daughter displayed a heavily bandaged crow with a broken wing that had been injured by a collision with a car.

There were just all kinds of animals all over the place. When I saw the interest and compassion that the entire family shared for animals it started to seem more plausible. A tightly-knit rural family lived close to the land in an isolated location. They were sensitive to the needs of the local wildlife and had more potential food sources lying around than they could even keep track of. It should come as no surprise that, if there were sasquatches inhabiting the landscape, and if the sasquatches would interact selectively with trustworthy human families, then these are precisely the kind of folks that would be "chosen." Sasquatch encounters seem to be more a matter of the sasquatches choosing to make their presence known, as opposed to being a matter of pure chance. Remember the words of Shane Varner: You don't find sasquatches. They find you. If there was anything to the idea that they select certain type of people to frequent, then these were just the people who might qualify. That much was evident after touring the homestead.

The Hoyts were initially puzzled by the strange nocturnal doings on their property. After a few eyeball sightings, they came to understand what was going on. At first they were concerned for their safety, but eventually they decided that these creatures did not represent any particular threat. They became comfortable with the sasquatch presence but they didn't discuss it with the neighbors. As far as the nocturnal activity that the Hoyts were describing, it was often quite close to the house. They heard the noise of clacking of rocks emanate from the woods. They felt the vibration of heavy footfalls. A whole host of strange grunts, snorts, and growls, screams and howls were heard. They knew their local wildlife and the noises

they heard, usually on summer nights, were not characteristic of any of the more familiar wildlife inhabitants of their woods.

Then there were the rabbits. They were losing rabbits from the outdoor hutches. The latches were being carefully opened and the rabbits would disappear without a trace. Only the younger ones would disappear, never the breeding adults. The chickens would similarly vanish and neat piles of feathers would be found on wildlife trails nearby. Trails in the woods around their property would materialize in areas they were not using, and sometimes the new trails would show the same vague impressions of large, bare feet in the compacted earth. Horse grain would disappear from the barrel at a greater rate than could be accounted for by the horses alone.

These were the indications that the sasquatches were feeding from several food sources that were unintentionally provided by this rural homestead. Again, this reflected a pattern that I had seen before, most recently in the LeFlore County chronicle. There were just too many assorted accounts and indications that these people were showing me, and their manner of describing the events was decidedly matter-of-fact. No one in the family seemed eager to impress me or win me over to their way of thinking. They were keen observers and excellent animal trackers. They were able to discriminate which of their dogs was responsible for some of the tracks that we were seeing on the trails around the house. The marks that they felt were sasquatch tracks were not worthy of casting but there were definitely scuffs and marks that suggested the movements of some sort of large-footed animal. It appeared that these people were completely on the level about that which they were experiencing.

I asked if I might spend the night sleeping out on the edge of the woods. They were surprised that I was game for such a bold move but they thought it was a great idea. I had an idea what to expect from previous investigations. I slept out under a tarp in the pouring rain with a camcorder at the ready. At 3:20 a.m., I was awakened by the noise of twigs snapping in the thick brush surrounding my location. The noises gradually became closer and louder. Something or someone was moving around my location. I could hear breaking twigs and coarse breathing noises over the racket of the rainfall. I must admit I was plenty spooked by these sounds and the possibility that sasquatches were very close to my defenseless position. As

the sounds got closer and louder, I became absolutely petrified. I could feel the hair stand up on the back of my neck and on my arms.

Allen and April had extended to me a standing invitation to retreat to the house if things got too scary during my vigil. I was suddenly feeling very vulnerable and I came very close to taking them up on their offer. When I heard footfalls around me, it was all I could do to remain in my sleeping bag and not sprint for the house. Then came the sound of flat feet slapping across wet earth as something ran past my location. I lay there, now wide awake, and afraid to move for the next couple of hours. I did manage to power up the camcorder and point it in the direction of whatever noise I heard next. As dawn approached, there were times when I felt the ground vibrate as something ran along a trail that passed within ten yards of my bivouac spot.

I nearly had a heart attack when the first rooster announced the coming dawn. I recalled Allen and April's mention of the fact that the chickens don't make a peep as long as the sasquatches are around. They also noticed that when the roosters do crow, the coast is clear and the bigfoots are likely gone. Though it startled me greatly, I was also relieved to hear the first rooster crow, for it meant that my frightening vigil had come to an end. Unfortunately, my attempt to record the sounds with my camcorder was not very successful. The clatter of rainfall hitting the tarp above me obscured most of the fainter sounds of animal movement. The video was no better. I slept out on other nights and heard less, and often nothing at all. By the third night at the site, it was so uneventful that it began to feel like the bigfoots were avoiding the place on nights that I slept out.

Large footprints and wide game trails continued to show up around their property, Sightings by the family and visitors continued, livestock such as bunnies and chickens continued to vanish, and various other types of bait that were left out for the bigfoots also disappeared regularly. Despite the many signs of bigfoot activity at the site, funding the project was a struggle. Financial constraints forced us to start simple. Our initial equipment consisted of a "Buckshot" weatherproof, motion-activated still camera. It was positioned to photograph anything that tried to enter an outdoor freezer that was being mysteriously raided.

The "freezer cam" as we called it, was tripped a few times during that first spring and summer, but no animal photographs were

obtained. Nothing was removed from the freezer while the camera was deployed. Meanwhile, a close-range sighting by both Allen and April, and many track finds, took place at a shady forest clearing elsewhere on their property. There were so many tracks in the leaf litter that we referred to the clearing as the "Dance Hall." We began leaving candy, bananas, and ears of corn there. The bait consistently disappeared. Nothing was happening at the freezer, so we decided to relocate the camera to the Dance Hall. The camera was tripped a few times at its new location but nothing ever appeared on the photos there, either.

I spent many evenings at the Dance Hall, waiting, watching and listening. I camped out there. Sometimes I heard noises in the thick brush. I heard a few loud screams echo from the distant ridge tops. One evening Allen and April were walking back from the Dance Hall after checking the bait. As they walked the trail through the woods, they spied movement in the brush just off the trail. They stopped. Next to them, less than ten feet off the trail, was a crouching juvenile sasquatch! They froze. They stood and stared at the sasquatch in quiet disbelief. It swayed back and forth as it studied them. Then, it stood up and sidestepped to a new location about ten feet to its left. It crouched down again, apparently trying to blend in with the large sword fern next to it. It took another step back and crouched lower and closer to the fern. They were dumbfounded. This was their closest look ever at a bigfoot!

After what seemed like an eternity, but may have been as little as thirty seconds, it occurred to both of them that this might be a very dangerous situation. Allen and April suddenly felt very nervous and out-of-place. (Allen told me later he felt as uncomfortable as a whore in church.) They looked around for signs of the adult that they felt certain must be in the vicinity. They didn't see one. They looked again at the juvenile, still crouching beside the fern. It seemed like a good idea to keep moving, just in case an adult was nearby and feeling defensive about their intense interest in the juvenile. April tried to be reassuring and spoke a few soothing words to the crouching creature. They slowly and gingerly began to walk away. No adult ever appeared.

As soon as they got home, they phoned me with the news. We were very encouraged by this sighting so near to the Dance Hall, but the camera never produced a photograph of a sasquatch. The bait stopped

disappearing and the bigfoot activity around that area soon ceased altogether. We also discovered that some of the game trails leading to the clearing had been barricaded with criss-crossed limbs. Later that summer, Allen noticed that the freezer had once again been opened and the meat we left as bait was gone.

Our camera was crude but with sightings and other activity at the site continuing, outside interest in the project began to increase. Richard Hucklebridge in Palmdale, CA made a generous donation and we were finally able to afford an equipment upgrade. We were also fortunate enough to enlist the help of Vaughn Hughes, a senior engineer from Intel Corporation who had recently joined our effort. He guided us through the acquisition and deployment of CCD video technology, infrared illuminators, and a motion-activated video capture software package known as "Eyes and Ears." This software enables a computer to capture, store, and upload images to a secure, password-protected website that Vaughn constructed. Image data could then be downloaded and viewed remotely from any home computer.

What sounds like a simple system was anything but simple. Beyond the equipment problems and computer glitches, environmental factors provided frequent hassles. Camera placement could not be based solely on promising locations for sasquatch activity. Much thought had to go into locating the camera so that unwanted video captures were minimized. At times, hundreds or thousands of "hits" were logged due to wind motion of trees, celestial and lunar movements, cloud motion, and weather changes. Video captures showed that cats, dogs, and birds were less bashful about being photographed than the more esoteric local wildlife we were after. Camouflaging of the equipment proved to be exceptionally difficult. The substantial heat output from an infrared illuminator prevents it from being covered by any camouflaging material that might catch fire. Eventually, through persistence and much fine-tuning of software and hardware, we were able to get the system running just as it had been envisioned.

Much like the SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) project, it was then necessary for our project participants to sift through the hundreds of images that were being captured each week. Dedicated individuals in the U.S. and Great Britain viewed and evaluated the hits in hopes of one day discovering the face of a sasquatch staring back at us through the camera lens.

On the night of December 29th, 2001, we got our best images on

the web cam. Allen was in the process of moving the camera location. It was late and he was tired. He had already disconnected the main camera, but the back up camera, disguised in a swallow nest box, was still operating when he went to bed. It was also an emotional day. Two of their dogs died on that day due to salmon sickness. It is a type of food poisoning they contracted from eating the dead salmon that had beached themselves along the creek. Everyone around the household was in a somber mood. Beginning around 10 p.m., something began casting shadows on the shrubs. The camera dutifully recorded it. Something moved very quickly across the field of view, which showed only as the outline of a head, shoulders, and arms. The activity continued sporadically for most of the night, with the camera recording numerous frames of this activity. None of them were clear enough to resolve any detail other than the outline of the upper torso that was repeatedly crossing the camera's view. All of the human residents had already retired for the night. We were all satisfied that the shapes were of an upright creature, and not one of the people who lived there. That is about all we can be sure of, based on the captured images that are of admittedly unsatisfactory quality. We plainly saw that our equipment lacked the necessary degree of nighttime resolution that the project required.

About a month later, we discontinued the project. We never got the clear bigfoot images we were hoping for, but we could certainly see that the ability to download the captured images using one's home computer was a huge improvement. I was no longer making frequent visits to the site to collect rolls of film, change batteries, then paying for film processing, only to find that wind and tree motion was repeatedly triggering the camera.

So, why did we terminate the project just when things were beginning to produce results? First, it was increasingly clear that the bigfoots were on to us and they weren't going to allow us to photograph them. They don't seem to mind microphones. Good audio recordings were not difficult to get, but when it came to the cameras, it was a different story. They seemed to travel virtually everywhere in the surrounding woods under cover of darkness, except for the area in front of the camera's lens. I can't explain how a "dumb animal" could possibly understand remote video monitoring and the ways to avoid it, unless of course, they're not really dumb animals. Skeptical and scientific folks roll their eyes and dismiss such suggestions as a classic

example of the unscientific and even wacky thinking that pervades bigfoot research. Regardless of its implausibility, those of us who have spent considerable time observing the situation at this particular site agree that the evidence points firmly in this direction.

To assign such cunning and intelligence to bigfoots may have one logical benefit. It helps explain why decades of effort by hundreds of people have failed to produce the highly sought-after scientific proof that these creatures exist. To put it another way: either bigfoots are much smarter than we ever thought, or we are much dumber than we ever thought. Since I don't like to think of myself as dumb, the only question that remains in my mind is just how far their cleverness and intelligence really extends. The more time I spend in their close proximity, the more I am forced to conclude that the bigfoots' mental capabilities extends much farther than we ever thought. I think they can reason, that they have sophisticated verbal communication, they have great physical speed, and they are extremely skilled at avoiding detection. I understand that scientific progress happens only when empirical data is gathered that supports such venturesome suggestions. Certainly, it is true that the evidence gathered so far does not even prove bigfoots exist, much less that they have the some of the remarkable abilities that I suspected.

After steadily monitoring the site over a two year period, it became clear that habituating "the locals" to our presence was a necessary step that was rushed a bit too much. My presence on the scene may have destabilized the situation and I probably pursued our photographic goals a little too quickly and too overtly. Remember that Jane Goodall spent years habituating the chimpanzees to her presence. We, on the other hand, were hoping to photograph an even smarter animal with little or no habituating. That was a mistake. We removed the cameras and decided to take a step back and attempt to habituate the bigfoots to our presence more thoroughly before we pointed any more cameras at them.

Though it seemed that we had reached a dead end with the remote monitoring and needed to take this step back, that is not why the project ended. It ended because the location of the site was compromised and the residents lost their privacy. We always knew that the location must remain an absolute secret, for the sake of the animals as well as the residents. We never guessed, though, how far someone would go to discover the project's location.

We always assumed that our biggest security concern was the possibility of other, eager-beaver bigfooters getting wind of our project location and then showing up uninvited. Perhaps they might show up hoping just to see a bigfoot. Worse yet, they might be there trying to shoot one. Either way, it was clearly necessary to keep the location confidential, which we always tried to do.

Nothing about the experiment except the location seemed like an important secret. Openly discussing all other aspects of the project was even necessary to gain financial support for the project. We electronically published a story about the experiment on the BFRO website. That led to interviews and articles in high-tech magazines. I gave a few talks to other bigfoot groups. Financial support and technical know-how came from this publicity. I also discussed the project with wildlife people I knew in the U.S. Forest Service. The location was never divulged but the idea and the technology employed was openly discussed.

I never would have believed that some other sort of sinister surveillance would be a concern. I found out that I was wrong. One day, Allen and April discovered that their house had been entered, that the computers were accessed, and that video and audio tapes obtained in the project had been stolen! They couldn't really believe it and they were reluctant to even mention this to me for fear of appearing slightly paranoid. Meanwhile, strange things happened to me. I discovered that my own house had been surreptitiously entered, and some items related to our monitoring project were gone. Only bigfoot stuff was missing: some photographs, a wireless miniature video transmitter, and some hair samples. Nothing else.

Like the evidence of bigfoot activity in the woods, evidence that people were spying on us was subtle and very difficult to be sure of. But just as careful attention makes the evidence for bigfoot more apparent, so does careful attention help one see that some sort of spying on and subverting of our efforts was taking place. We still sought more concrete evidence of spying before we were convinced. Allen and April called a telephone repairman to investigate the frequent clicks, strange noises, and excessively long download times that were happening on their telephone line. Sure enough, the repairman found incontrovertible evidence that the phone line had been tapped in two different places. The repairman was a little shook up about it and he was certain that the damage to their phone

cable was intentional. It was clearly for the purpose of accessing the line. The lack of unaccounted-for long distance calls on their phone bill enabled them to rule out the only other possibility: that someone accessed their line to make free phone calls. A month or two later, their house was entered in their absence a second time, the computers were accessed again, and more videotapes from the project disappeared. At that point, they had enough. They wanted to help solve a bigfoot mystery but they weren't interested in being a target for some kind of espionage activity.

We had a meeting. They said they wanted out of the project. I understood.

It is impossible to know who was behind it. Public lands managers certainly have the money and access to the spy stuff. Private timber groups are almost as well-funded and they may have an even greater incentive to monitor any efforts that might help make the ultimate endangered species into a proven fact. Other bigfoot groups might be behind the spying too, but the tactics we were subject to seem too determined and well organized for small, loosely-organized bigfoot groups. Also, I know the other bigfoot groups. I talk with them all the time. They know what I'm up to because I tell them. They needn't spy on me and steal things to find out what I'm up to. I give them the information for free whenever they ask because secrecy never felt right to me. Other than the location, I would have shared our progress with anyone, in or out of government or industry who had the decency to simply ask.

And they did ask. I had many conversations with Alan Dyck, who heads the wildlife division of the Mt. Hood National Forest. He was very interested in the camera experiments I was conducting. I showed him our best image captures and we agreed they were not good enough. Alan was also very interested in my suggestion that we implement a similar camera project on the Mount Hood National Forest. He was interested in the camera technology, not for bigfoots but to document reclusive members of the mustelid (weasel) family, specifically fisher, marten, and wolverine. Since I was a teacher, Alan steered me in the direction of a Portland State University professor, Dr. Marion Dresner, who headed a joint project with the Mt. Hood National Forest called Teachers in the Woods. The Forest Service bought us ten remote wildlife cameras and I was given a crew of teachers. Together we stationed and baited cameras during

the summer of 2002 in remote parts of the Mount Hood National Forest. We captured many photos of marten, as well as bobcat, raccoon, bear, deer, elk, and many birds. No wolverines. We observed a few curious instances in which the cameras were moved or were triggered but nothing appeared in the photos. Direct sun striking the infrared sensor was a common reason for false triggers during the daytime. We also got a few nocturnal "false triggers" which produced empty photographs in the middle of the night. They remain a mystery.

The teachers enjoyed the long hikes to the camera sites, the deploying of complex photographic equipment, and the weekly thrill of seeing what manner of wildlife appeared in the photos that we captured. After the first summer setting cameras we had no wolverine photos to show but the camera project was still seen as a big success. We used three different kinds of trail cameras in the study. Not surprisingly, the most expensive one ($550) was also the most sophisticated and versatile. Whether the target species is a bigfoot or something else, the Trailmaster Infrared Trail Monitor (Goodson and Associates, Lenaxa, Kansas, 913-345-8272) is the unit I would recommend for all camera monitoring in wilderness settings. The single sensor, active infrared triggering system of the Trailmaster is much preferable to the dual sensor, passive infrared system that is employed on all of the less expensive systems such as Buckshot, Deercam, Camtrakker, and WildlifePro. The dual sensor systems, also known as the Manley system after its inventor, triggers when it detects a combination of infrared heat from the animal and motion that is detected at microwave frequencies. This system does not trigger if either heat or motion is absent, and it is a bit slower to respond when it is triggered. Also, it seems to be biased toward the heat signatures of larger animals with the short, "nappy" fur that deer possess. Creatures with longer fur and better insulation do not always trigger the dual sensor (Manley) systems. The still more sophisticated computer monitoring that we employed at the Hoyt's place is possible only when the infrastructure of the site includes 110AC power, a phone line, and an on-site shelter for the computer. For that project, the weatherproof camera and infrared illuminator were obtained through Extreme CCTV. The computer must be a Pentium II or higher grade machine, and "Eyes and Ears" was the video/audio capture software that was used.

The Mt. Hood National Forest wildlife department's camera proj-

ect received positive reviews from the forest supervisors and from the local press. The *Sunday Oregonian* ran a story in March of 2003 on this innovative attempt to document wolverine activity on the forest. The fact that the project originated from the persistent suggestions of a local bigfoot researcher was prudently downplayed in the media. The camera project has been sustained and received an increase in funding and I hope to be setting more cameras with a new crew of teachers in the summer of 2003.

Having known other Forest Service employees over the years, I was not surprised to find that every Forest Service employee I worked with, whether a supervisor or a field person, was very knowledgeable, dedicated, and outgoing. Many of them were interested in my pursuit of the bigfoot hypothesis. Maybe I shouldn't be, but I was surprised at how often these career forest workers had mysterious forest experiences of their own to share that were consistent with the bigfoot hypothesis (Chapter 3). They shared with me and I shared with them everything I knew, whether it was about wildlife cameras or bigfoots. After having worked with them, it is hard to even consider the possibility that such curious and open-minded people would oppose any attempts to gather information on the more mysterious creatures that may or may not inhabit the woods, whether we're talking about wolverines or bigfoots.

Nor do I believe that other bigfoot groups would eavesdrop on our camera project in Washington, though the possibility had certainly occurred to me. Burglary and wiretap seems a bit too concerted to be the work of bigfoot enthusiasts. Such tactics would seem to be the work of an entity who routinely used such means to gain information. Whoever they are, I suppose that they do it because they do not want their interest in the matter to be known. It may seem paranoid to suggest that a government agency or forest products industry consortium would want to keep tabs on our progress. It was suggested to me by a retired federal law-enforcement person that it is naïve to think that people wouldn't resort to such surveillance measures. It was further suggested that if there were industry-sponsored attempts to monitor the progress of bigfoot researchers, it would be done through a private eye who would do the actual information gathering and surveillance for them. Of course, we'll never know for sure. I've decided I don't really care since we're not doing anything illegal. But Allen and April value their privacy and so I cannot blame them for deciding

that they did not need this kind of hassle. Like me, they only wanted to help solve a wildlife mystery, not an espionage mystery.

It strikes me as both strange and sad that someone thinks spying on small-time private researchers will keep bigfoot research from making progress. They clearly don't understand the "information age" we are now in, nor do they realize how many folks are currently interested in the bigfoot topic. Computers are doing more than helping us remotely monitor promising sites of bigfoot activity. Through skillfully crafted websites like BFRO, researchers gain direct access to thousands of previously inaccessible sighting reports from isolated rural residents all over the continent. In some cases, the information we gather is so recent that we can get to a remote sighting location before the bigfoots have left the area. But the most important new use of computers may be the dissemination of all of this new and detailed information to the world, again through websites.

No government agency or industry group can stop this flood of information. It won't work because there is too much verifiable information, too many witnesses, and too many people who are vigorously and independently investigating this subject. Electronic and print media that historically treated the subject as a joke and a myth have woken up to the new sources of information and they are utilizing them when they prepare contemporary documentaries. This enables them to present the subject much more seriously. The old media angle, that bigfoot is a myth and a joke, is passé. A fresher and more accurate perspective is that bigfoot is an example of a real phenomenon that science, with all of its inherent biases, has managed to overlook. Bigfoot documentaries and newspaper pieces are now addressing the recently acquired body of sighting report data and new types of scientific analyses of the physical evidence that have been collected to date.

The attempt to gather photographic data was disappointing but it was hardly a bust. We did capture some low-quality images, but nothing close to what we had hoped for. On the other hand, my work at the site has led me to eight tentative conclusions, none of which I expected when I began the project:

1) Bigfoots seem to choose certain homesteads to frequent based on things like the available sources of food, and perhaps even more

subtle matters like a "live-and-let-live" attitude displayed by the residents. Bigfoots have the capacity to identify people who display compassion for animals, besides their ability to identify farms and ranches where surplus food is abundant.

2) Bigfoots consciously and effectively avoid most human contact and they may be particularly averse to bigfoot researchers. Trying to stalk a bigfoot is not just futile, it may also be counterproductive. If you want to meet a sasquatch, don't be sneaky about it. Best to look like you are in the woods for another reason, like hunting mushrooms or painting a scene.

3) Bigfoots are very smart and they appear to be quite camera shy. The more you try to trick them, the trickier they become in avoiding your tricks and traps. If you are trying to get a bigfoot on camera, make sure that your first attempt is your best attempt. Whether they understand it is a camera is a point of considerable debate. Regardless, they have an aversion to things being pointed at them, particularly things that look like weapons or big eyes.

4) Habituating bigfoots is a key step. Even when it appears that there is only one around, there are often others that are keeping their distance. Gaining their trust takes an amount of time that is measured in years, not months. Children and human females seem to be trusted by bigfoots much more readily than human males.

5) We saw definite signs that the juvenile was sometimes unsupervised and prone to bold moves out of childish curiosity, therefore juveniles may be easier to photograph. One reason why bigfoots block trails with sticks may be to serve as a reminder to the juveniles not to venture too close to the camera or other suspicious items just ahead.

6) Getting photos or video means getting lucky. Stationary, mounted cameras are obvious and ineffective, particularly at night, when sasquatch activity is highest. I would suggest wearing a hands-free, button-sized miniature camera mounted on a helmet or worn on the lapels. Record images on a belt-mounted digital recorder.

7) Forget about proving they exist by shooting one with a gun. There are practical problems of caliber and shot-placement that make the chances of success improbable in the extreme. Also, where there is one sasquatch, there is quite often a second, or even a group. Shooting one of them might necessitate defending the kill, and one's self, from the retribution of some pretty unhappy bigfoots. When people ask me what to do if they manage to shoot a bigfoot, I quote Dr. Krantz: "Reload."

8) Somebody out there is interested in keeping tabs on researchers who are making progress. Don't become paranoid. Just keep a low profile.

As a result of my work on this experiment, I came to realize that habituating bigfoots, getting them to the point of trusting the human residents, is the critical step. At the time that this realization occurred to me I knew of no successful effort to habituate sasquatches. Yet, I knew the world to be a big place and I suspected that someone, somewhere is probably well on the way.

I was convinced that a large forest tract in virtually any state ought to eventually yield a bigfoot, if one could only wait long enough. After trying to accomplish this myself, I could see that it was a huge test of personal endurance to remain in the woods long enough for "the locals" to trust the human intruder. Varied and intense displays of intimidation are certain to occur in the process. If one can hang tough in the face of that, then trust and habituation may eventually be accomplished. I could see that it would take years, and few researchers have that kind of time. It would be necessary to live at the research site.

I was sure that I would someday learn of successful effort to habituate a group of sasquatches to human presence. I expected it to occur on Native American tribal lands but I also supposed that it might not be shared with anyone outside the tribal community. Native Americans have a justifiable distrust of Caucasians. Science has never valued Native American lore as a reliable source of information when it comes to the sasquatch, and Native American elders probably feel the same way about science. They are also very aware of the sasquatches' strong desire to remain undisturbed.

Allen and April displayed the same ethic that I understood to

exist on tribal lands. It appeared to me that anyone who achieves success at habituating bigfoots develops considerable empathy for the creatures along the way. This empathy is so strong that one becomes completely unwilling to betray the creatures by sharing with others the secret window they have gained into the hidden world of the sasquatch.

A year after completing the camera project, Dr. Fahrenbach informed me of two habituation situations, one in Northern California and another one a rural farmstead near Knoxville, Tennessee. Everything Henner described fit my expectations for a successful habituation of sasquatches. It was his considered opinion that the Tennessee situation described by Janice Carter Coy was genuine.

I am pleased to know that someone has accomplished exactly the kind of habituation that I envisioned, though I am daunted to hear that the investment in time and patience is even longer than I expected. For that reason, I am in awe of their accomplishment. A book that describes this landmark achievement is available through Mary Green's "Tennessee Bigfoot Lady" website.

Ray Crowe published the first discussion of a habituation situation that I've been able to find in print. After reading a draft of this book, Ray provided me with this example of a successful habituation of sasquatches that transpired elsewhere in Washington State. A woman, who was interviewed by Greg Long in the April, 1999 edition of *The Track Record*, described a visit to some friends of her grandmother in 1976. These people lived in an isolated location near Goldendale. They agreed to show the woman the rapport they had established with the local sasquatches. They had been feeding the creatures over a twelve-year period. At first they saw only one, but gradually they were able to observe as many as twelve individuals at one time. In this excerpt from a lengthy interview published in *The Track Record*, the visiting woman is describing the sasquatches' interaction and communication that she observed at very close range:

> I figured they were talking because they all paid attention to the big one when he was making sounds. But it wasn't the same sound. The sounds were different. It kind of reminded me of mutes when they're trying to talk but with no power to do it. When the mutes try to talk, they can't form the words.

They (the sasquatches) didn't move around like scared wild animals...they were casual. One of them sat down on the picnic table. The sun was on its way down but it hadn't gone down yet when this was going on...still toward the tops of the trees...they were in between the shadow and sun. There was a little one who was trying to get closer to where we were, on the porch.

It was on the order of what a coyote does when he's coming in and making sure, and you can't look at them directly or it will scare them, so you have to just glance at them and look away. Then Carol said, "Why don't we sit on the edge of the porch and hang our legs over." The porch was high and our feet didn't touch the ground. The other ones were eating, not caring what was going on, apparently. The female that was nursing was keeping an eye on that small one who was trying to get over to me but wasn't sure if he should. He came up real close. If I'd have put my hand out, I could have touched him. I talked to him the same as I would one of our animals, to encourage him to come closer. I was trying to give him (or it) the feeling that we wouldn't hurt it; that things were all right. He was about the height of a four-year-old kid. He finally got over to the porch and I was sitting very still.

I asked Carol if it was OK to move and she said, "Yes, start swinging your feet." The next thing I knew, my ankle was being grabbed! Thank goodness it was a little one! He grabbed my ankle and was running his hand across my foot like it felt weird to him because there was no fur there. But he wouldn't let go of my feet for a long time—maybe five minutes or ten minutes. When you've got your feet crossed and something is hanging onto your feet, you kind of wonder, "What's going to happen next? Like, is he going to take a chunk out of me, or what?" The others (sasquatches) at the table were keeping an eye on him but not really caring. I think they have the feeling that, like animals, that if something is afraid of them, they might get hurt. I just tried to relax myself as if this were any other kid.

There were about seven or eight of them around the picnic table. All sizes. I wanted to touch the one at my feet so I moved my hand slowly to my knees, just out of curiosity, then I moved my hand back a little bit. I wanted to pick it up real bad but I was keeping my eye on the other ones because I didn't know if I should. The little one put his hands on my knees and our fingers were just about touching. I didn't move toward it; just kept still to show I wasn't going to hurt it and then I got brave. The sun was going down and I was getting a little leery because I thought with the light there, maybe I was safe so I got off the porch and started walking and talking to the little one, going in the direction of the picnic table. It followed for the first two steps then it started running after me. It stayed right next to me. I could have put my hand down to grab its hand but I was leery of what was in front of me.

All of the others ones were at the other side of the picnic table when I went over there and told the little one to stay and then turned to walk away. I felt like there was something around my throat, like sensing something is following me but I was afraid to turn around and see whether it was small, medium, or large. I walked quietly over to the porch and got on it then I turned around. It was a female who had followed me over and she was running her hand through my hair. She seemed to have no fear even though I was a stranger and even though they were used to other people. Carol had never seen anything like that before and she was keeping her fingers crossed that everything was going to work out alright. The female was also big. I had to look up at her. Then she just turned around and walked back over to the picnic table. It seemed like she was smiling so I smiled at her, if it was a smile. There had been no expression on her face and then there was a change of expression, like a smile. Then it went back to nothing.

All this time, I could hear movement in the bushes, like there were others there that were afraid to come out. When I sat down in the chair on the porch, one of them sat down

on the picnic table bench. Carol and her husband said that was the first time they had ever seen one use the bench. Normally, they would watch through their big picture window and not sit outside. Carol started talking about other things that she'd seen them do and we kind of lost track of them. They were taking the rest of the fruit and walking away with it. It was twilight now. There was some fruit left. There always was, like they were saying, "We've taken ours, now this is yours." Later on, the small ones would come back and take it all away.

The witness offered these observations about the way bigfoots relate to forest animals, particularly deer. It seems especially relevant to the LeFlore County situation and the unresolved question about the origin of the deer in Chapter Four:

Other animals are not afraid of them. Carol said they communicate with them but the big one (bigfoot) brought in a big buck with its neck broken and left it in an open area like an offering. It seems that they (the bigfoots) know that they (the couple) eat meat and because the couple are giving them fruit, the bigfoots are giving them meat. Sometimes it's a deer; sometimes a rabbit, but it's always a sheer break at the neck. I think they've seen him shoot a deer during deer season or a rabbit or a pheasant or something like that.

It isn't frequent because she says you see them out there with those animals having fun. I don't understand. Even though they play together, I don't know how they (the bigfoots) explain to the other animal that they're going to die. It takes a big man to carry one, but that big one (bigfoot) literally just killed it and it brought it in alone, over its shoulder. Carol said they were watching the one time he brought the buck in and it was like a sack of flour he was carrying on his shoulder.

Thanks to Ray Crowe for providing this interview from his *Track Record* archives. It is a good example of the future direction of bigfoot research. It is gratifying to know that habituation appears to be

possible, and that it may have already been accomplished, based on the anecdotal data that Ray and others have gathered.

Meanwhile, potential habituation sites continue to surface, offering new opportunities for experimentation. It is now April, 2003 and the cameras just went back out in the field at a promising new site, this time a little closer to home. Dance Hall Days aren't over yet.

Internet Link to BFRO Remote Monitoring Project:

www.bfro.net/avevid/remote
Click on: "Interesting images captured to date"
for animated sequences of suspected sasquatch shadows.
Download time can be long, particularly on second animated sequence.

chapter six

The Skookum Expedition

"We're not going into the woods looking for Bigfoot," I told my wife. This time, we're going to let the bigfoot find us. That's the plan for this expedition."

She stared at me with the familiar look of disbelief, having been through all this before. This wasn't the first bigfoot expedition I had planned. For the past few years I had spent several weekends each year probing remote locations of recent bigfoot sightings. I think I became interested in the bigfoot thing because it gave me an excuse to get out and use my wilderness skills. My life-long love of the wilderness exploration has a purpose beyond just getting there and back. But my life-long partner was starting to suspect that I'd mentally lost my grip.

Meanwhile, three guys in different states e-mailed back and forth the emerging plans for this next big outing: The Skookum Expedition. Jeff Lemley, a Washington BFRO person had previously organized a few weekend outings to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. He spread us out around the national forest with walkie-talkies or CB radios. Using a loudspeaker and tapes of alleged bigfoot calls which had been recorded elsewhere, we would play the calls as loud as possible into the night and hope for a return call. We refer to this as "call-blasting." It is fairly crude by today's standards but it is one of the few ideas we had back then that had produced an audible reply from some animal on rare occasions. Our last such expedition was a bit of a circus.

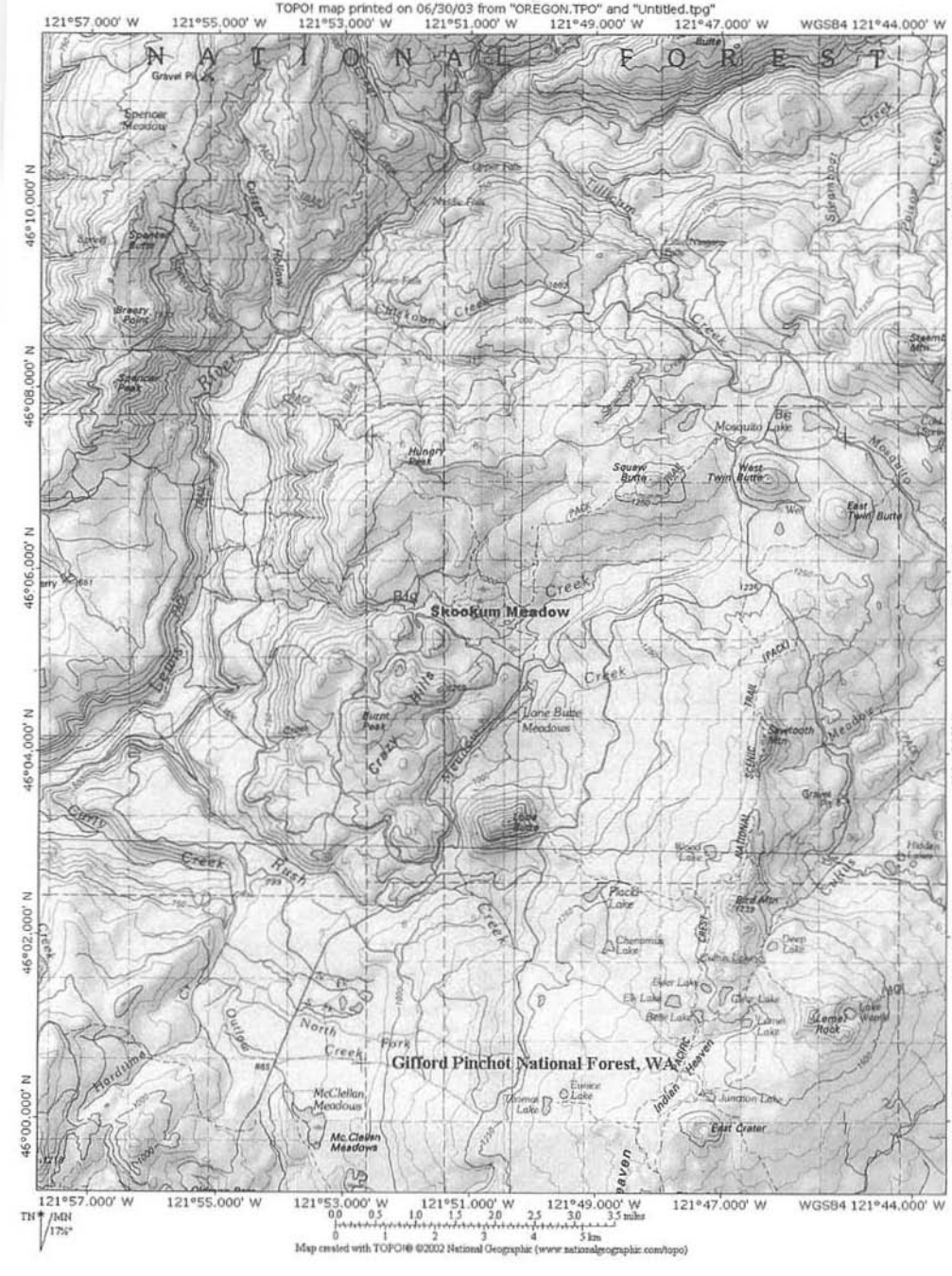
It must have been a comical scene if it was witnessed by any of the local sasquatches: One television reporter and two dozen guys with

night-sight viewers, guns, sound equipment, camcorders, cars, and radios driving around, listening, and talking on radios. We didn't hear any replies to the call that we played at high volume but no one got lost or injured so that might be called a successful outing. Jeff spread out the group so that people were camped at several locations. He had Steve and Joe and I camped near one of the roads into Skookum Meadow, a high elevation wetland meadow near Mt. St. Helens that is very popular with elk hunters in the fall.

Sometime after dark, Steve and I left Joe at camp and went off to rendezvous with the rest of the group. Meanwhile, Joe built a nice little fire and relaxed. Not long after, Joe started to hear "brush popping," the snapping of small branches and twigs that indicates something moving on the outskirts of the campsite. The sounds of movement traveled completely around the campsite at close range. Joe felt pretty sure that the alternating pattern to the noise suggests a two-legged, not a four-legged creature. He started to get more than a little spooked by all of this. It turned out to be one of the very few interesting events in the entire weekend's effort.

It's interesting how quickly a person gets spooked when he feels like there might be a bigfoot around. Even when one is hoping for exactly that, it is still quite a surprise to experience the sensation first hand. No matter how much one tries to rationalize the situation, you still end up scared stiff. You tell yourself over and over that they won't hurt you, but a palpable sense of foreboding overcomes your being like a dark, sinister thundercloud that glides over the landscape. Joe was a Marine for six years and a rural-raised outdoorsman, but the noises on the perimeter had him huddling close to the fire and keeping his eyes on the woods. At one point, a stone was kicked loose as the creature moved along the top of a twenty-foot embankment on the south side of our camp. and it rolled down the embankment and right into camp. It came to a stop only yards from where Joe was sitting. At this point, Joe was not a happy camper.

When Trapper Steve and I returned after 2 a.m., Joe was mercifully asleep in the tent. Every lantern and candle in the camp was glowing brightly on a flimsy camp table in the center of the camp. I made the mistake of trying to roust Joe to see what was up with all the candles. When I stirred him, he screamed like a house afire. If Joe had been sleeping with a gun, I would have probably been shot. When he came to, he told us what took place.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NATIONAL FOREST
Skookum Meadow
Gifford Pinchot National Forest, WA
Lone Butte Meadows
McClellan Meadows
Mc.Clellan Meadows
Squaw Butte
West Twin Butte
East Twin Butte
Big Lake
Mosquito Lake
Hungry Pass
Spencer Meadow
Spencer Peak
Sheep Lake
Placid Lake
Chenoma Lake
Deep Lake
Eb Lake
Bear Lake
Lemah Lake
Lemei Rock
Lake Merrill
Junction Lake
East Crater
Thomas Lake
Eunice Lake
Bird Mtn
Sawtooth Mtn
Grave Pk
Hidden Lake
Wood Lake
Buzzy Peak
Lone Butte
Big Creek
Lewis River
Clear Creek
Rush Creek
Quitclaim Creek
Hardtime Creek
North Fork
Indian Heaven
Bevan
Meadow
Scenic Trail
PCT
Butte
Gravel Pit
Tillicum
Mineral Springs
Steamboat Mtn
Meadow
Creek
River
Ridge
Hills
Trail
Lake
Peak
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Fork
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Meadows
Meadow
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Indian Heaven
Bevan
Quitclaim
Hardtime
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Lewis
Big
Skookum
Meadow
Lone Butte
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McClellan
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Mc.Clellan
Meadows
Gifford Pinchot National Forest, WA
East Crater
Junction Lake
Thomas Lake
Eunice Lake
Bird Mtn
Sawtooth Mtn
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Chenoma Lake
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Lemei Rock
Lake Merrill
Mosquito Lake
Big Lake
Hungry Pass
Squaw Butte
West Twin Butte
East Twin Butte
Spencer Meadow
Spencer Peak
Sheep Lake
Gravel Pit
Tillicum
Mineral Springs
Steamboat Mtn
Butte
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MN
17½°
0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 km
Map created with TOPO!® ©2002 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

The next day we searched the area around camp. I found an animal trail and enough elk tracks that I couldn't rule them out, though there were no elk tracks at the place in the embankment where the stone was kicked loose.

When the Skookum Expedition was being planned, we recollected that event. Henry Franzoni also had very positive things to say about the bigfoot potential around Skookum Meadow, which lay a mile distant from that camp. Henry was a reliable source on such matters. Bigfoot researchers like Henry Franzoni know something that most historians don't know. When Native Americans and early settlers named places for skookum, cultus, devil, or splintercat, they weren't imagining things. Sightings had likely occurred there and these were their more-dignified names for the creature we have trivialized in modern times with the ridiculous name "bigfoot." We decided to focus on Skookum Meadow for the upcoming expedition.

Jeff got busy scouting locations for camps. Joe and Trapper Steve also spent time looking over the possibilities and visiting sites. Matt in California used his nationwide contacts to assemble a strong team of experienced bigfoot researchers.

Storyteller Productions, an Australian production company, approached the BFRO with a request to accompany us on one of our expeditions. They were the producers of a cryptozoology-oriented TV show entitled "Animal X." Matt obliged them with an invitation. They responded with a proposed schedule. They would be filming in the states in September and wanted to add a bigfoot segment. They offered to bring along a thermal camera that could be used for making nighttime observations around camp.

That got things moving. Mention of the camera crew and the thermal camera helped Matt get other researchers interested in joining the team. Media coverage would be enticing even if we were just out there bird watching. Publicity is even more gratifying to the much-maligned bigfoot researcher, unless it is bad publicity, which it usually is. It is pretty easy to spoof the bigfoot topic but times were beginning to change. TV producers were finding a fresh perspective to the bigfoot phenomenon by presenting the evidence more seriously than in the past. We settled on Skookum Meadows and started making arrangements to ship the necessary people and gear to Portland, Oregon. I was the outfitter of the expedition.

Hundreds of e-mails later, we hammered out the details of a week-

long, twelve man expedition to the edge of Skookum Meadow. We would borrow John Frietas' impressive portable loudspeaker. Vaughn Hughes would provide improved, digitized versions of the taped bigfoot calls. A wildlife scent expert known as Dr. Juice would provide us with primate pheromones that would presumably entice the two-footed forest dwellers. LeRoy Fish and I would haul up any extra fruit from our home orchards. Our basic plan was to use the calls to lure a sasquatch in close to our camp with any sights and sounds and smells we could muster. I felt like I knew how to draw them in and the thermal imaging camera sounded like just the thing to have ready if and-when the bigfoots came around to investigate our camp.

September 24, 2000, Skookum Meadow:

The loudspeaker bellowed eerie noises into the darkened forest. From our midnight station on the edge of an elk meadow, Jim Henick and I could hear the creepy wails that were being blasted at 120 decibels from our camp some two miles away. Layers of fog settled into the darkened meadow before us. Three great horned owls traded hoots. Our group of a dozen researchers was spread out at a series of listening posts over several square miles of forestland. Sighting report patterns and our own experiences on previous expeditions also helped us select this area as the likely hang-out of at least one sasquatch.

Back at camp, we made a point to cook lots of bacon and other fried foods. We played taped calls of possible sasquatch vocalizations at high volume. We placed the smelly pheromone attractant strips in the trees around the camp. We spent our days snooping around the landscape, looking for track evidence or just trying to learn the spiderweb of local forest roads. A few areas, like Skookum Meadow itself, have been gated off so one must hike in. It was a dark hike into our listening post for the nightly sessions of high-volume call playing. Day time was for resting up, but time spent learning how to better access our positions in the daylight was invaluable when it came to finding our way back to the remote spots in the dark. Jim and I were a forward team, positioned on the edge of the large roadless wetland known as Skookum Meadow. Our cohorts played the calls from atop a bluff near camp. Walkie-talkies kept us informed of when the next calls were going to be played. Jim and I concluded that it wasn't necessary to be utterly silent. Who were we kidding? Our sounds and scents would be noticed by anything as wary as a resident bigfoot.

One thing we had learned from pouring over sighting report patterns: these creatures are curious as well as wily.

The pattern over many reports suggested that noisy campers in remote places have more sasquatch encounters than silent, stealthy hunters. To exist and yet remain so well hidden, a sasquatch must also be smart. Too smart to miss the approach of two nocturnal observers like us. So Jim and I sat, talked with the owls, and listened. Suddenly, Jim's keener hearing detected three closely spaced whacks from a stick hitting a tree. We knew from our research that such a noise is sometimes attributed to sasquatch presence. We listened intently for a couple more hours. At three a.m. we decided to vacate the meadow. We returned to camp and joined Matt and Jeff on the bluff for more hourly call blasts while the other expeditioners retired for the evening.

At 4:20 a.m. we heard our first reply from the wilderness. As we stood around a fire chatting, eight successive bellowing cries came from the general area of Skookum Meadow where Jim and I had just been. We froze and strained to hear more. I flashed back to the knocking Jim heard from across the meadow. The skookums are around! We listened to the night for another hour, but our eyelids got heavy and our all-night vigil was over. The next night Jim and I were back in Skookum Meadow, once again listening to the taped calls echoing up the valley. Around midnight, I began to doze. Jim sat upright and I sprang awake at the unexpected sound of a loud howl from the general direction of camp. Did they just play a call? Jim picked up the walkie-talkie to ask. Other listening posts were already on the radio reporting their receiving of the same howl. It was plainly audible by everyone around camp except I, who had nodded off. All the rest agreed that it was not a familiar animal, that it was not the echo of one of our calls, and that it was essentially the same call that we had been playing on the loudspeaker, except louder!

The following day the rain moved in for the first time all week. Everyone slept in and then scattered around the surrounding countryside to do the usual exploring. When we returned to camp we saw that we had a visitor. Paper plates had been stapled to trees on the road into camp saying things like "Lawyers go home" and "LA is 1400 miles thataway!" A prankster had visited our camp to make playful but rude jabs at Matt Moneymaker, the BFRO director and former law student from L.A. It turned out to be none other than a local gadfly of Portland's sasquatch subculture, Todd Neiss. Jeff Lemley had found

his digital camera lying in the dirt, then bumped into Todd personally a few minutes later. Todd found our location by talking to Joe Beelart. He was generally aware of the gathering in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and Joe let slip the location of the camps he scouted for our benefit.

Ever since Todd had a well-documented Class A sighting of his own many years ago (Chapter Ten) he has been a devotee of the bigfoot phenomenon. It becomes a passion. Knowing a remarkable truth that few others share can be a difficult thing for some people to put aside. Now a bunch of outsiders were invading the local researcher's territory. Todd couldn't resist. He decided it would be fun to do a little spying, and maybe leave a few signs that disparaged our clumsy expedition. When one cannot find any bigfoots to spy on, spying on other bigfoot researchers can be a suitable substitute.

The next night we heard our third return call from the wild. This time, it came from the woods on the other side of camp. Up to this point, there were some skeptics in our group. Dr. Greg Bambanek (Dr. Juice), the psychiatrist and animal scent expert who brought the primate pheromones, was one. After the second night, when all heard the closest and loudest howl, there were no more skeptics in camp. After the third night of getting a return call from the woods, all of us knew that we had company. The unanimous feeling in camp was that the bigfoots were around. Our calls had likely aroused their curiosity and brought them in for a closer look at whatever was disturbing their woods. Now, we had to get busy and come up with a plan. If we didn't do something soon, time would run out on our expedition. Meanwhile, the thermal camera wasn't cooperating. The images that the camera produced lacked definition, and the batteries didn't last long, making it impossible to maintain an all-night vigil with the camera for signs of animals on the move. On Thursday night, the Australian film crew was staging shots of people using the thermal camera and communicating with walkie-talkies.

When film crews start staging shots, that's not a good sign. They're getting desperate for filmable material. When I saw that happening, I knew we'd better think of something fast. Then, it dawned on me. Surprisingly, we had not done any baiting and then I remembered: Oh yeah, that was supposed to be my part of the expedition. My plan for the expedition was to do fruit baiting experiments to entice the local wildlife, particularly of the bigfoot kind, into leaving tracks for us.

Other researchers I had spoken with over the years claimed successes with this approach. It seemed like the expedition was at a pivotal juncture. Nothing of importance had been accomplished but we had gotten some very promising indications that the bigfoots were, indeed, around. The thermal camera was a joke. It didn't work well in the humidity, and the battery life was ridiculously short. We needed to try something else and we needed to do it fast.

I went over to the campfire where the group was huddled for warmth. The rain had finally quit. The stars were appearing. It would be a cold night. Our campfire conversation always seems to return to bigfoot matters and this time I reopened the subject. I explained my baiting plan to the group. I asked for volunteers to help put out fruit. The reaction was as cool as the evening air. It seemed that no one else was familiar with such an approach. It seemed like a long shot. I explained that it had produced some interesting results at the homestead in western Washington where the family was reporting repeated sasquatch visitations. The homeowners and I had been putting fruit piles in their woods to try to entice the creatures into stepping in front of our motion-activated camera. Even though the camera had not been tripped, the fruit would sometimes vanish and large but indistinct footprints suggested that a bigfoot might be responsible.

A few eyebrows were raised around the campfire at the sound of that, and some questions followed. Vague footprints? How good were they? How do you know it was a bigfoot? It could be other things. My answers lacked plausibility. By all indications, the bigfoots were around all right, but they were deliberately avoiding leaving tracks. At the homesteaders' site, we had been watching a strategically placed patch of bare clay earth for tracks and wondering why there weren't any, especially considering the level of activity that was being seen and heard right around it. The landowners and I had become convinced that the bigfoots were sidestepping or even jumping over the bare earth so as to avoid leaving obvious tracks.

That story didn't go over well. And when the bigfoot researchers don't buy your story, it must be flimsy. Maybe it was the shadows of the firelight on their faces, but this group of guys looked pretty skeptical of the situation I was laying down. But I'm a stubborn cuss, so I insisted. "Hey, guys, strange as it sounds, I'm telling you these animals are smart enough to know about tracks, and to know how to avoid leaving them. Also, bigfoots know a "set up" when

they see one. The folks who live at this site swear the bigfoots are walking right around our camera locations. They've shown me the signs they're finding. It's pretty subtle stuff but I think they're right."

It was nearly three a.m. when Rick agreed to give the idea a try. After all, it was one of the few ideas that we hadn't tried yet. He was going out for a drive anyway, to try to get some images with the thermal camera along the forest roads. OK, he would put out fruit piles along the way. Derek and Leroy agreed to follow suit. Off they went. Thirty minutes later, I heard a faint voice coming from the radio in my pocket. I pulled it out and listened. It was Rick. His alternator just died. He and two others were stranded ten miles from camp. Time to organize a rescue. By the time we got all the people and vehicles back to camp it was after four a.m. Without the radio, they would have never made it back before dawn. The fruit was put out and everyone was finally back in camp. Compared to the ordeal of getting all the vehicles back, the fruit was almost an afterthought. No one expected it to amount to much and we didn't discuss it or even think about it. We just went to bed.

The clear night brought the first frost of the season and a majestic sunrise that no one saw. Mt. St. Helens proudly wore the season's first new dusting of snow. Frost coated the camp's tents and ice on stacks of dirty dishes glistened in the bright sunshine that roused the expeditioners. By ten a.m., Rick, Leroy, and Derek were ready to bust a move and check the bait stations on their way into town where Rick's alternator could get checked out. I began packing my gear for my return to Portland. About noon, I was through packing when Rick, Derek, and LeRoy came roaring back into camp. They jumped out of the truck. Rick was wide-eyed and purposeful as he approached me.

"You were right! They DON'T leave tracks," he declared.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It worked! They ate the fruit! A bigfoot lay across the mud so it could reach the fruit without leaving footprints. There's a big ass print and a whole bunch of other stuff in the mud! You got to come see this!"

Minutes later, we were all staring in disbelief at the impressions in the mud almost a mile away from camp. The fruit had been placed in the center of a muddy flat beside a logging road where a puddle had stood the day before. The puddle was situated in the middle of a large

gravel pull-out that was used to park and turn around logging trucks. Rainwater had formed the puddle only a few hours before. Derek found this superb spot on his midnight drive and he positioned a pile of fruit in the center of the disappearing puddle. Nothing could reach the apples, peaches, and cantaloupes he left without leaving some kind of trace. As soon as they arrived at the spot the next morning, Derek, Rick, and LeRoy noticed that some of the fruit was gone. It took a little longer to figure out why. Rick was the first to put the pieces together and interpret the unusual marks in the mud. The discussion of the previous night was still fresh in his mind. In front of him lay the evidence to support my most unlikely-sounding position of the night before: Bigfoots DO know a set-up when they see one! But fresh, homegrown produce is a rare treat for a bigfoot who resides at high elevation. Our bait must have been irresistible and a bigfoot went after it, leaving a lower torso impression, but no footprints, in the mud. Could we be seeing strong evidence that bigfoots will do what they can to avoid leaving obvious tracks?

No other explanation seemed to fit. Some of the fruit was gone, some lay in bits around the area, and a large, hair-covered form with long, thick arms and legs left an impression of its lower body in the mud next to the fruit. When he arrived at the site, the first thing recognized by Rick Noll was a heel impression. Then he noticed what appeared for all the world to be the impression of hair-covered buttocks. Leroy and Derrick were back by his side and they collectively resolved the impression of a thigh, an elbow, a forearm and finally a fist and finger marks. That's when they dashed back to camp to show the rest of us what resulted from the fruit-baiting experiment.

Soon, all of us were assembled at the site. Emotions ranged from disbelief to amazement, then back to disbelief. It dawned on me that I was witnessing a moment of genuine scientific discovery. I got out my camcorder and began taping the scene. If our initial feelings about this set of dents in the mud were correct, we were looking at some of the best evidence ever found to support the fact that bigfoots do exist. Two years later Rick Noll would appear on a televised bigfoot documentary entitled, "Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science" which was produced by Doug Hajicek and first aired in January of 2003. The Skookum Cast was being discussed as a particularly solid piece of evidence that supported the sasquatch hypothesis. Rick commented on the show that we had no idea at the time how significant the cast

would become. That may be true for Rick but it wasn't true for me. As I stood there staring at the impression in the mud and the preparations to cast it, I knew with every bone in my body that this was the most important piece of evidence that any of us would ever be involved in collecting. I got a lump in my throat as I tried to grasp the significance of the scene before me. Then I shook it off and got busy helping the others.

What to do next? All agreed that we had to preserve it before it dried up, turned to dust and blew away. As good as it was to have a camera crew right there to document the find, we knew we needed to do more to preserve every possible detail for future scientific study. Rick Noll had the solution. His experience with casting tracks would be very handy. But this was a helluva lot more than just a footprint. Matt suggested that we needed to cast the entire impression in plaster. Rick was just the guy to make that plan work. Fortunately, Rick had almost two hundred pounds of Hydrocal-30 in his truck. He brought bags of this superior casting material with him from Seattle to give to LeRoy. Instead, it was going to be used for making the "mother-of-all-bigfoot-casts," and at last, the film crew from the "Animal-X" had an interesting event to tape for their show.

Hydrocal-30 is a fine-grained plaster-like casting material with common industrial uses such as casting garden statuary. We would need every ounce of what Rick had to encase the three-foot by five-foot mud impression in one solid slab of stone. I had another twenty pounds of regular plaster. We would probably need that, too. But having that much Hydrocal-30 on hand was an unbelievable godsend since the stuff is hard to find. The impression in the mud was drying out rapidly in the midday sun. Valuable time would have been wasted on a trip to the nearest town just to buy inferior plaster of Paris. Hydrocal-30 would provide superior strength to the cast and it would better preserve the fine detail of the hair impressions, muscle and tendon detail, and skin (dermal) ridges. It would also pick up any hair strands that may have been left behind.

Wooden forms were made around the impression. A first layer was delicately splashed onto the impression. Once dry, subsequent coats were added more coarsely. It took the rest of the day to fill the forms with layers of Hydrocal and plaster, and then somehow extract the whole thing from the sticky clay earth. At Rick's direction, we reinforced the huge cast with aluminum tent poles for much

needed torsional strength. This prevented the cast from breaking when it was lifted from the mud. Thanks to the materials and know-how of Rick Noll, and the hard work of Alan, Erin, Jeff, LeRoy, Greg, Derek and Matt, the immense cast was successfully lifted free of the earth, transported to camp and secured for the bumpy trip to Seattle.

Once the mud-caked Skookum Cast was safely in Seattle, the most distinguished sasquatch researchers were notified of the find. They descended on the artifact and for several days the cast was painstakingly cleaned under the supervision of Dr. Jeff Meldrum from Idaho State University. The cast was also inspected by retired anthropologist and pre-eminent bigfoot scholar Dr. Grover Krantz, wildlife biologist and author Dr. John Bindernagel, Dr. Ron Brown, and author/retired journalist John Green. All concerned agreed that it was not an impression left by bear, deer, or elk. Dr. Meldrum, after several days of cleaning and examination, was completely satisfied that it was genuine and is now preparing a write up of his examination for publication in a scientific journal. Dr. Krantz was perhaps the most guarded in his assessment. In his view, either it was an excellent hoax or it was a genuine cast of a bigfoot's lower body.

Physical remains collected at the site help rule out hoaxing. At least one primate hair was extracted from the cast and turned over to Dr. Henner Fahrenbach at the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center in Beaverton, Oregon. Dermal ridges and dermatoglyphs, their related structures, are plainly visible on the cast. These fine skin ridges and pores are only found on the hands and feet of humans and other primates. They are considered by Meldrum and Krantz to be highly diagnostic of primates. They are also virtually impossible to fake. The pattern of the hair that was preserved in the cast is completely uniform everywhere that it is evident. Extensive areas of the fur pattern are seen on the buttocks and thigh regions of the cast.

The anatomy of the limbs and torso are also completely consistent with the dimensions that were suspected and written about by Dr. Krantz for years. For example, Krantz has long postulated that a sasquatch must have an ankle that is well forward of the heel and thus, closer to the center of the foot. This would be necessary for proper weight distribution on such a heavy biped. This configuration is preserved and plainly evident in the cast we collected.

The Skookum Cast confirms some other long-held suspicions

about the life and times of your average bigfoot. For one thing, mature individuals are, in fact, BIG. Dr. Meldrum used arm and leg measurements from the Skookum Cast to calculate that the creature that sat down in the mud near our camp was about eight feet tall and eight hundred pounds in weight.

These guys are big, but they are also very shy, though this does not mean they retreat to their wilderness sanctuary at the first sign of human activity. They may inhabit the trackless wilderness most of the time, but they venture out of it for a variety of reasons. One reason is to check out humans. If there is a deserted road handy, they will use it. Roads represent not just the path of least resistance, but an avenue that leaves few if any traces of their passing.

We do not find as many tracks of bigfoots as we ought to. The Skookum Cast suggests that there is a good reason for this. Bigfoots are indeed smart enough to conceal their tracks and they understand the value of doing so. The creature that left the impression we found did not expect that we would identify the unfamiliar impressions of its lower body and limbs. It didn't know we had Rick Noll with us and if Rick wasn't there we would have likely missed it.

The Skookum Cast also supports several other suspicions about these elusive animals. Bigfoots will eat many of the same foods we eat. They probably eat meat but they are not strict carnivores. They like fruits and vegetables. They need their dietary fiber. They are not people and though they may be hominids, most researchers consider them to be of the Pongid, or ape, lineage. This might make it easy to underestimate their intelligence. To be sure, they are exceedingly astute as to the ways of the woods. Forget about hiding in the bushes to see one. They are way too smart to fall for that. Bigfoots probably know when we are trying to stalk them and it is almost impossible to do. To bring them in, it may be better to just leave behind an item of interest and then go away. If they're around, they'll wait you out and check out the object only when you are long gone. They won't leave footprints in obvious places and they avoid soft, bare earth where tracks would be evident. Further, they may not be completely nocturnal but they get mobile and investigate human encampments under cover of darkness. They seem to prefer the wee hours just before sunrise, when humans are least likely to be awake.

Perhaps above all, those who participated in the expedition are proudest of the fact that we didn't just "find" the Skookum Cast. We

coaxed the animal into leaving it. We demonstrated that it is possible to predict elements of the animals' behavior and diet. Our careful research of every available aspect of this legendary (but real) species paid off. We have shown that it is possible to manipulate this animals' behavior; to steer it into a situation where it will leave us distinctive remains of its passing. We succeeded in bringing the bigfoot to us, instead of just chasing it endlessly around the landscape. When someone wants to trivialize my interest in serious sasquatch study, they ask, "Are you guys still looking for Bigfoot?" Nowadays, my response is, "We don't look for bigfoot. We let the bigfoots find us. We've done it before and we'll do it again."

Whenever one group of bigfoot researchers makes a claim to a potentially important find, other bigfooters quickly move to minimize the claim. This is a familiar story in most scientific circles. Since most people in bigfoot field researchers hope to be the one who someday makes the groundbreaking discovery, they are particularly eager to invalidate the claims of the competition. The Skookum Cast is certainly going to get its share of this treatment. One angle on discrediting the Skookum Cast is claiming that it was made when an elk wallowed in the mud. I am not an expert in elk wallowing, but biologists who are much more knowledgeable than I have looked at the cast in detail and declared with confidence that it was not the impression of an elk. The detail of the forearm, leg, buttocks, thigh, and heel are plainly primate.

Others heard that Todd Neiss was in the area on the day prior to the find and that his presence taints the cast's claim to authenticity once and for all. Certainly the participants in the expedition were furious that they had to defend their accomplishment against such claims. Todd counters that it was public land and he had every right to be there.

Since Todd appeared before the cast was even found, no one was particularly annoyed by his visit at the time. I, for one, was surprised that he didn't just drive into camp, say hello, and hang around for a while to meet everyone. We had other visitors to our camp in the course of the ten day stay. After the Skookum Cast became the celebrated outcome of the expedition, I could see that it would be necessary to do damage control on the whole Todd Neiss visit, like it or not, because it was obvious enough that detractors would allege that Todd somehow created the impression in the mud that we found.

I know Todd Neiss well enough to feel confident that he would not plant bigfoot evidence no matter how much he felt left out of the situation. The fact that Todd Neiss was around the area on the day prior the appearance of the cast was an unfortunate coincidence. It is also a fact that has not been widely discussed by participants of the expedition for fear that it will raise further question as to the authenticity of the cast. My BFRO comrades are likely horrified that I would report the fact that he was around at all. It is indeed unfortunate, but it is a fact that must be reported, because it did happen. If we conceal that fact, it becomes even more suspicious. It must be admitted, and I don't see it as particularly damaging information. I know that Todd would never want to be known as a perpetrator of a bigfoot hoax. He is much too serious about the bigfoot subject to risk being dismissed like Ray Wallace. Todd emphatically stated that he has never faked a track or any other bigfoot evidence and he delivered to me a signed letter stating this when I asked for it.

The Skookum Cast was scrutinized by many qualified people and they were satisfied that it is genuine. Grover Krantz was the most guarded in his assessment. On the basis of his scrutiny he decided that it is either genuine or an excellent fake. Scientifically, this hardly puts the matter to rest but I am personally satisfied that Todd did not, and could not have faked the impression. The baiting experiment that precipitated the impression had not even been conceived at the time that Todd was around, not to mention the fact that the bait had not been placed and the baiting locations were not predetermined.

Retired journalist John Green, with forty-three years of experience in bigfoot investigations, is the most experienced sasquatch field researcher alive today. He has interviewed more witnesses, seen more tracks, inspected more incident sites, and published more sighting reports than anyone else. He has said for decades that, "Nothing short of a piece of a body will definitively establish that Sasquatches are real." After twice inspecting the Skookum Cast, his thinking has changed. John told me after reading the above account, "I believe that the Skookum Cast contains so much solid evidence that it makes it unnecessary to deliver a body to science, provided we can get enough influential scientists to study the cast."

I was proud of the fact that we precipitated the Skookum Cast, rather than just stumbled upon it. The other thing that I was proud of was the fact that it was very much of a team effort. It was my sug-

gestion that we do some last-minute baiting experiments when nothing else was working in our favor, but I did not actually do any of the baiting. Rick and Derek took the fruit that Leroy and I brought and put it out in places that were completely of their own choosing. The next morning we sent Rick and Derek and Leroy out to check the bait stations. When they found the positive results at one of the stations, Rick's casting material was properly and quickly applied with everyone's help. The result was a piece of evidence that has been described by many as the best piece of bigfoot evidence since the Patterson-Gimlin footage of 1967.

I was initially pained to see the discovery being claimed by Rick, Derek, and Leroy who labeled themselves as "the discoverers." I got over it though, knowing that I got all that I wanted out of the expedition: a great story and the satisfaction of knowing that my kooky idea turned the trick. Rick has dedicated much more of his life to bigfoot pursuits than I have, and he deserves to be called the discoverer of the Skookum impression. Truth be told, it was Rick's sharp eye that resolved the impression *after* it had been stepped on by another of the initial trio. If Rick hadn't been in the team that checked the bait, I think the impression would have been missed.

Fortunately, Rick was also involved in a pivotal conversation the night before, Rick did the bait check and Rick had sufficient supply of casting material on hand. If none of that had happened, my kooky idea probably wouldn't have amounted to squat.

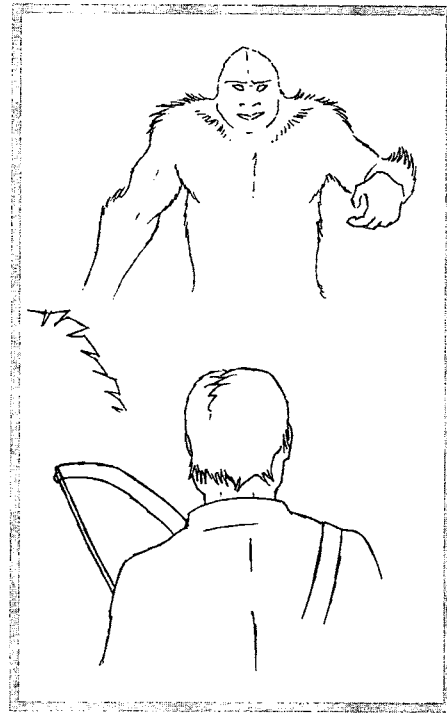
Alas, it may be that the much-maligned bigfoot researchers are particularly hungry for the glory that comes with discovery, since there is so little of it to be had. In truth, it is probably just as common in other scientific circles. The field guys who make the initial find are often resentful of the fact that their discovery is somewhat usurped by the academics who pore over it after the fact. But the careful scrutiny that comes from the academic interest is critical if the discovery is ever going to be validated. The mud-covered field guys forget that without the endorsement of the academics, their cherished discovery will languish forever in obscurity. They need the academics to endorse the discovery as badly as the academics need the field guys who are out there digging in the dirt. The Skookum cast was fortunate to receive the attention of many academics, including Drs. Fish, Krantz, Bindernagel, and Meldrum. Rick Noll put a lot of time into making it available to those and other scientists. The cast has ended

up in the right hands and it has benefited from the considerable analysis that it has received. From all of the scholarly scrutiny, it has been determined that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that an elk, not a sasquatch, made the impression. The necessary elk hoof prints are absent. The hair pattern does not match any part of an elk. Rather, the pattern that was preserved has been found to closely match another partial sasquatch body impression that was provided by Joe Beelart. Dr. Fish was able to resolve several features of primate anatomy that are evident on the impression. The Achilles' tendon, dermatoglyphs, and possibly an impression of the scrotum were resolved by Dr. Fish and discussed at a presentation in Bellingham, Washington just before his death.

The Skookum Cast needs an academic sponsor to write it up in peer-reviewed scientific journals before it collects dust in the warehouse where it now resides. Occasionally, Rick makes the cast available for inspection by an interested scientist. I hope one of them sees the opportunity to author a paper and collect the glory for doing so. It has gotten a fair measure of publicity so far, but it has not really rocked the scientific world. It does remain as one of the most important items of bigfoot evidence that has ever been collected. I am pleased to know that I was somehow involved in its acquisition, and that it came about through a combination of teamwork and serendipity that typifies scientific advancement. I hope John Green's feeling that it "seals the deal" as far as bigfoot evidence goes, gains momentum, but that does not seem to have happened yet.

chapter seven

Rocky Meets the Locals



"Seeing is believing," and since few people see bigfoots, few believe that there are such things. But Grover Krantz was the first academic who risked his reputation and career by insisting that bigfoots actually exist. Dr Krantz used to say that, when it comes to bigfoots, "Believing is seeing." By this, he meant that the evidence supporting the bigfoot hypothesis is seen by many people who visit the woods or live on its margins. They don't grasp the evidence they are seeing, though, because they never took seriously the possibility that bigfoots might exist. Believing is seeing.

It's hard to blame them, really, because the evidence is usually so subtle. It's one thing to see a twisted off tree in the woods with a few fine hairs hanging from it, or see an uncommonly large pile of scat, or a dead deer with a broken back leg and a missing liver. Some people may notice a very powerful smell while on a hike in the woods, or hear breaking branches and heavy footfalls around their campsite. A rancher may notice that he has been losing a large number of chickens, or hear a long, loud, frightful wail coming from the nearby woods. If one didn't know what bigfoot activity sounded like, smelled like, or looked like, then one could hardly be blamed for attributing these events to ordinary wildlife.

If more people saw a bigfoot dash across the road in the beam of their headlights, then more people might accept the fact that they

exist. If bigfoots were not so shy about being seen, or if they were not so nocturnal in their activity, then the whole matter would not seem so improbable.

Rocky Bounds did see a bigfoot run through his headlight beams as he peered into the inky blackness that was Highway 18 one night in the Oregon Coast Range. Rocky is a lifelong hunter and very much at home in the woods, but up to that point he had never seen anything that gave him reason to think that bigfoots really existed. But seeing that hulking form glide across the darkened highway left him with no other choice but to conclude that the bigfoot legend was for real and some huge, fast, and rarely seen creatures inhabit the forest.

Since that brief but unforgettable sighting, Rocky began to understand why a friend of his who lives in an isolated homestead will not leave his house after dark without a loaded gun in his hand, even just to get into the car. But having a bigfoot sighting on the highway was not going to keep Rocky from his favorite pastime, which was bow-hunting for elk in the mountains near his home town of Dallas, Oregon.

Which is exactly what Rocky was doing one Saturday morning in the fall of 2001 when things began to get a little strange. If Rocky hadn't once seen a strange shape shambling across the road he might not have made the connection between the unusual sights, sounds and smells that he encountered on this particular excursion in his favorite patch of elk habitat.

Rocky is an avid bow hunter, so in the fall, Rocky's wife understands that she won't see much of her husband on Saturday mornings. Rocky's favorite place to hunt lies on a tract of private timberland in Oregon's Coast Range. He parked his car at the gate that keeps the vehicle traffic off the private road. He began walking up the steep road toward a checkerboard of clearcuts and dense timber stands. He knew that the mix of timber stands provides ideal habitat for the elk herd he frequently stalks. It's not a pristine forest, but the roads provide easy access and the cleared areas provide more abundant grazing than is found in the dense stands of alders, hemlocks, firs, and cedars that dominate the wet, shady creek bottoms. Steep ravines and swampy bottomlands make traveling anywhere but on the logging roads very difficult.

So, Rocky walked the logging roads at dawn, with bow in hand, in search of the elk herd. Everything was ordinary until some bent and

twisted alder saplings caught his eye. Something seemed strange. The saplings were twisted off at a height that was out of his reach. The leaves on the broken tree tops were still green and alive. The trees were too stout to have been broken off without power equipment. And they were twisted, not just broken. There was no sign of chains or cable damage in the bark of the trees. No sign of anything. Just lots of two-and three-inch diameter alders broken and twisted off about eight feet off the ground.

Then he found the strange clearing beneath a cedar tree. Something or someone had fashioned a bed of ferns and fir boughs. It was a big bedding area and it had been recently used. Bear was the most likely suspect, but something seemed unusual. Rocks had been arranged in a circle to define the edges of the bed. The boughs had been hauled to the spot from somewhere else. But not being one to favor mysterious explanations, Rocky dismissed it as the work of a tired hunter or a very industrious bear. He continued his hunt.

Now he was hearing strange noises in the thickets around him. It was late September and the alders that thrive in the creek bottoms still had all of their leaves. Salmonberry, Devil's club, elderberry, thimbleberry and ferns combine to make an impenetrable thicket. Visibility was very limited. Something could be quite close and yet still out of sight. From the sound of the stalking, it seemed to Rocky that whatever it was, it was very close.

The roads Rocky traveled descended into a swampy bottomland. Now the once-wide road had turned to a one-lane, two-track affair with sagging limbs of vine maple and elderberry forming a tunnel-like canopy that gave the road a claustrophobic feel. The situation had "ambush" written all over it. As he crept along the road, he heard a strange noise in the brush, followed by the crash of a tree falling over. Rocky wheeled toward the noise and ducked down. He scanned the area where the tree had fallen. Nothing. Then a piercing scream echoed through the sun-dappled woods. Now he was really spooked. This was not fun, anymore.

He found another twisted off tree. Rocky looked at the ground at the base of the broken tree and saw a fresh footprint in duff. It measured fourteen inches long and seven inches wide. Next, he found a large, fresh pile of feces (scat in wildlife parlance) in the middle of a narrow spur road. The stench was overpowering. At this point Rocky is coming around to the realization that he may be in the

vicinity of a bigfoot. He decides it would be a good idea to collect some of the scat. He wrapped it in the cellophane from his sandwich and took it with him.

He heard a new sound: the knocking of one stick on another, or perhaps a stick striking a tree, but with the resounding echo that hinted of impressive strength. Rocky stopped and listened again. More knocking. He took one of his arrows and tapped it against the side of his bow in response to the tapping from the woods. He heard more knocking. He responded with more tapping of his own. This went on for twenty minutes. Rocky felt sure that no one else was in the woods that morning, but that something was answering his taps with wood-on-wood knocks. Rocky displayed an admirable coolness and curiosity that few could muster under the circumstances. But he eventually had enough and headed back down the road toward his car. As he walked, he heard steps and sticks breaking just out of sight in the brushy forest. Something was following him out of the woods. He made it to his car without further incident and headed home.

Later that day, Rocky logged a sighting report on the Bigfoot Field Researchers' Organization website. His array of "Class B" events was impressive: lots of strange noises, unusually large tracks were found, a large and very smelly scat, and a few hairs found on a tree. All in all, quite an array of unusual events. When I saw the report, I gave him a call. He was eager to hand over the scat to someone and get it out of his home freezer. He also had the hair.

We arranged to meet on a Sunday at the high school where Rocky is the building custodian. The next day, I sat with Rocky and my friend Keith Baker in a very nice and very empty school library in Wilsonville. I like to take a friend when meeting a witness. It gives me someone to discuss the situation with, and it provides a little company on the drive. Rocky recounted the entire experience for us. He handed over the scat and wanted to know what I thought of the events he experienced.

"Well," I explain, "There's nothing that you mentioned that I haven't heard before. We see twisted off trees in other places where people have had sightings. Reports of strange knocking often occur, sometimes to be followed by a sighting." There is a host of such events that may be pretty good indicators of a sasquatch presence. A "feeling of being watched" is probably the most common sensation reported by those who report possible encounters. Some of them have

eyewitness sightings shortly thereafter, though Rocky did not. Being followed by something that kept out of sight and sounded like it was walking on two feet is another observation that is mentioned in many bigfoot sighting reports.

Not many people report the twisted tree thing. Very few are even observant enough to notice something like that. We call them "twist-offs" in the bigfoot biz, and it is something we often encounter when sasquatches are thought to inhabit a particular patch of woods. Hypotheses abound, but no one is quite sure what to make of it: warnings, territorial markers, navigational aids, or idle destruction? Take your pick. Skeptics shrug it off as snow, wind, or vandals. Sometimes, they are correct. Snow will generally fall a number of trees in a stand. Wind will lay them down in the same general direction. One stout tree, still wearing green leaves but bent and twisted from a point eight feet off the ground is suspicious, indeed. Whatever it is, it'll never sell the idea that bigfoots roam the landscape, though the field guys see it a fair amount, and they see it as an indication of an active area.

Rocky didn't want a namby-pamby answer, though. He wanted to know whether I think his experiences add up to a sasquatch or not. After my usual disclaimers about how little any of us really know about the whole deal, I decide to stick my neck out.

"Yeah," I tell him. "I would say that even though not one of your observations is a definite, you are reporting quite an array of things that all point in the same direction. I'd say you probably did bump into a sasquatch."

"What about the turd," Rocky wants to know. "Can't they take that and analyze it for DNA or something?"

"Yes and no. The fact that you found one that is so fresh that it was still steaming is about the best you can do, I'll give you that." DNA workups cost about $800 dollars, and there aren't many guys who want to spend that kind of money on a scat, since there is every chance that the DNA that is isolated is coming from the prey that was consumed by the animal, no matter what that may be. The BFRO can't afford a panel van full of emergency response gear, and they can't afford an $800 DNA work up on a scat. The fact that the scat is fresh means that it is possible to find the epithelial cells that are shed from the lining of the gastro-intestinal tract. Those could yield some excellent DNA if the right part

of the turd is analyzed. But it's a crap shoot." (Sorry for the scatological pun.)

"Anyway, I know a guy at Portland State who might try to work it in with a batch of other samples. They have the primate DNA markers that could be used to determine whether it's of primate origin. But in the end, the result is always the same. They can tell you only what animals the scat ISN'T from. They can't tell you it's from a sasquatch because no one has the known sasquatch DNA to match it with. If it is sasquatch DNA that is isolated, it will not match anything else in the few sections of the chromosomes that are carefully examined. What does that tell you, really? Unfortunately, not very much. Bottom line: don't look for the sasquatch mystery to be solved by DNA. Before that can happen, someone has to take a chunk of tissue from a dead sasquatch specimen. Only then will the DNA from that sasquatch be useful for identifying another specimen. Even then, it is possible that, due to variation within the species, other samples would not make a perfect match. Kind of a Catch-22, eh?"

Rocky shifted restlessly in his chair. He looked both bored and confused. Clearly he was hoping for a simpler and more optimistic answer. Time to change the subject.

"Let's try something," I suggest. "Don't hold your breath on extracting DNA from the turd, but I'll see what I can do. Meanwhile, we need to try to get these guys to step out into the open a bit more if they're willing to play along. Now, if I go with you and we go wander around the site, I can tell you what's going to happen. Nothing. As much as I would like to have you lead me to a sasquatch that I can see for myself, I know that it would be a waste of time to try."

"Have you ever seen a sasquatch?" Rocky asked, as does every other witness I interview.

"Nope. But the Bible says, "Blessed are those who have not seen, but who believe." Maybe that makes me blessed, though I don't think the Bible was talking about bigfoots. Anyway, that's not what this is all about. Besides, I know better. Even if they are there, you wouldn't be able to just take me up there and show me one. It doesn't work that way, and believe me, I've tried. I've learned that there's a smarter approach. You had the encounter before. Maybe there's something about you that "the locals" are comfortable with. Maybe it's because you are a local too. I don't know. I do know that if anything else is going to happen, you have to go back to the area, yourself. Alone. Just

like you do when you're hunting. Heck, take your bow and DO some hunting. But I would suggest that you take some bait with you. Think of it as a peace offering to "the locals." We had great success with fruit last year at our Skookum Meadow expedition.

"We think they like fruit. If they live in the wilderness, they may see it as an uncommon treat. Apples are about the cheapest, easiest to handle, and keep better than most other fruits. Don't be skimpy, either. They may not move on two apples, but they may go after a big pile of them. The pattern I think we're seeing is that they'll take part of what's left out, and leave the rest. It seems they are wise to obvious baiting, so don't get cute and put the apples in the middle of a patch of bare, fluffy earth. They'll know what you're trying to do. If you're going for tracks, try to be less obvious about your intention. On the Skookum deal we left a pile of fruit in a mud puddle. We were lucky because the puddle was disappearing fast as the weather warmed up; leaving a patch of mud that was perfect for impressions. But don't expect big old footprints that go straight to the bait. It seems they're more wary than that. You can expect them to get low and crawl in. So you're just as likely to find the impression of a leg, an ass, a knee, or whatever. Anything but footprints. It's not that they never leave footprints. It's more like, they don't leave footprints when they can help it. And they're probably even more wary when they know people are around. By the way, do you have a camcorder, Rocky?"

"Nope. I don't even have a camera," he confessed. "I can get one of those disposable ones though, that comes with the film when you buy it. That's what I used to take these photos of the twisted off trees and the footprint."

"Well then, it'll have to do. You'll have to get pretty close to get any kind of usable photo with one of those. No harm in trying, though. It's my guess that you have almost no chance of sneaking up on one of these guys. You're on their turf out there and they seem to know you're coming before you get there. From what I've investigated, the hunters who've gotten the best look at a bigfoot were in tree stands. Do you ever hunt from a tree stand?"

A tree stand is a seat-like contraption that attaches to a tree trunk. You sit in it, some ten or twenty feet off the ground. You wait and wait, but by being silent and up off the ground, you are much less likely to be spotted by wildlife that are used to looking for predators

at ground level. You also get very uncomfortable and sometimes very cold.

"No, I never use one. I like to keep moving. If I do see a bigfoot, what should I do? Are they dangerous?"

"Not unless you try to shoot it," I offer. "If you do see one, the first thing I would do is sit down. You look a lot less threatening that way. Staring directly at an animal may be a potential challenge or threat, so if you do see one, even at a distance, try not to stare directly at it, but don't let it out of your sight, either. If you take your eyes off it, even for a second, that's the last you'll see of it. They'll be gone in the blink of an eye. I can't explain it, but I've heard it happen too many times to doubt it: somebody gets an eye one of these bad boys, and the next thing they know, they hear something else stir behind them, or off to one side. Then they turn their head to see what the other noise is all about. Nothing there. So, they turn back to the one they were looking at, but...*poof*..it's gone. Go figure. It's my guess that they work in pairs. Whenever you see one, there is likely another one around. Maybe more than one. When one of them is feeling just a little bit cornered, another one "goes off" in a big way. You're already a bit spooked and you can't help but look toward another noise. This gives the first one the opportunity it needs to make a clean getaway. They work together very effectively. Anyway, you should be so lucky as to get a good look at one. But you won't do it by sneaking around. Unless you can make yourself invisible, they'll know you're in their woods."

We talked for an hour. I remember how intently he listened to everything I said. He never became restless. His eyes never wavered; they stayed locked on mine as we talked. He seemed to be soaking up every word. Rocky resolved to return to the area as soon as he could, which wouldn't be until Saturday. He had his other experiences at dawn, so we agreed that dawn would be best for the return trip.

"Can I take my bow and hunt elk while I'm there?" Rocky wondered.

"Don't see why not. You had your bow last time when all that other stuff happened. Since the chances are you'll go back and see a whole bunch of nothing, you may as well do some hunting."

Rocky gave me the scat and the hair he collected. We shook hands and parted ways. On our way home, Keith and I evaluated his observations, his demeanor, and his overall credibility. The general feeling

was that he was probably on the level. He was willing to meet with us face to face and tell me the whole story. Hoaxers do not want to sit down for a serious interview and if they did, they would not keep a straight face for very long. Hoaxers who send bogus reports on the Internet are usually teenagers, but who ever they are, they have no desire to look a serious researcher in the eye. But no hoaxer is going to show up for a meeting with photos of curious items, hair samples, and a frozen scat in a cooler. This guy had a good job, and he had keys to the entire school. Rocky was sincere when recollecting his experiences, and he was interested in everything I had to say. He was eager to hear suggestions as to what he might try next.

Still, he never actually SAW anything, though he did have the sighting a few years before. On this outing, he just heard a bunch of strange noises, found some indistinct footprints that were a bit small by sasquatch standards, found a bunch of twisted trees, and of course the scat that truly stunk to high heaven. He was definitely a hunter. There was no doubt about that. He knew the lingo, he knew when the bow season began and ended, and he had a hunting license. No doubt there. I asked enough questions about his hunting technique to feel sure that he knew his stuff.

All in all, I concluded that it was a legitimate "Class B." I wrote up an evaluation of the interview while it was still fresh in my mind, but I wasn't going to post anything on the Internet until he was through with the follow up visits to the site.

Most sightings end pretty much right where things were at that point. Despite the good intentions and keen desire by the witnesses to resolve their strange experiences, it is just not expected that they will be too eager to return to the site unless they lived there. If they do return to a place where a sighting happened a week ago, the creature could be expected to be many miles away by then. I've been to the location of many recent sightings in a timely manner and I've always been skunked. Maybe a track is found but that's about it. If the witness is willing to go back to the site alone, that fact can be seen as one of the best indicators that they sincerely believe that whatever they experienced is for real. But I didn't really expect to hear any more from old Rocky, and if I did, there wouldn't be any real news. The last thing I expected was the kind of call I got from Rocky on the following Saturday afternoon.

"Thom, that was my favorite hunting spot but I'm never going

back there again as long as I live," were the first words out of Rocky's mouth.

Now there's a line I've heard a few times before, always by a hunter who just had the daylights scared out of him. Sgt. Chris Berg, of Divide Ridge fame, comes to mind. I knew whatever was coming next was going to be good, but I never could have guessed how good.

"There's at least four of 'em! I saw two with my own eyes! And I definitely heard two more! It was just like you said! They tried to distract me when I started to approach the first one I saw. That's when the big one stepped out. It was all I could do to keep from wetting my pants. I've never been so scared in my entire life. My wife said I looked like I saw a ghost when I got home and she's not far off. I'm still shaking!"

"OK, OK. Start from the beginning," I coaxed.

"I got there before dawn, just like before. I had my bow with me, and a disposable camera. I also brought a bunch of apples. Just like you told me, I left them in pile, in an open area beneath some power lines. Then I just kept hunting. After about a half hour, I had walked a big circle and was back to where I could see the fruit again, still lying in a pile on the ground. I was about two hundred yards from the bait and I couldn't believe what I saw. There on the ground, doing a belly crawl toward the fruit, was some sort of brown, furry object that wasn't there before. It looked kind of like a bear at first, but it was doing a belly crawl right toward the fruit.

"I couldn't believe it! I got out my camera but I could see that I was too far away to get a decent photo. It would have been a brown blob on the ground from far away. So with my camera in one hand and my bow in the other hand, I started to creep closer to the thing on the ground. Now I could definitely see it moving and it was definitely doing a belly crawl toward the fruit. Then it happened. I hear this loud screaming going on behind me. But I remembered what you said."

"What did I say?"

"You said they try to get you to turn around, to look away," he replied.

"So did you?"

"Hell, no! I did what you said. I didn't take my eyes off that guy on the ground, 'cuz I remembered that you said that they would try to distract me. Now this thing behind me was making quite a racket. For

all I knew it was doing jumping jacks back there. But I didn't turn around. I remembered you told me not to."

"Great job, Rocky. Then what?"

"So, I'm getting closer to this thing doing the belly crawl, but still too far away for a good picture. All of a sudden, I hear something else start screaming and howling behind me, but this one was behind me on my other side. It was definitely a second one. It was behind me but off to my right. The other one was behind me on my left, and it was still screaming, too! So now I have two of these things screaming their heads of behind me. It was all I could do to not turn around. If you hadn't said not to turn around, I would have, for sure. But I just kept my eyes on the one ahead of me on the ground. I was still too far away to get a picture so I kept moving toward it. Meanwhile, these two things behind me are still going nuts, you know, screaming and hollering. Heck, for all I know they were doing jumping jacks back there, but I wasn't going to turn around, no way, 'cuz you said that's what they wanted me to do. I didn't take my eyes off that one on the ground, but then HE stepped out of the bushes."

"He?"

"Yeah, he. And he was huge. Must have been eight feet tall, easy. Maybe nine. He was huge, he was mad, and he was close! Thirty feet away. Maybe less. No way I couldn't look at this one. He was screaming and waving his arms."

"How'd you know it was a 'he'," I ask?

"Because I could see it was a 'he." There was no mistaking it. He had a penis. And it wasn't small. I mean to tell ya, it was obvious!"

"Then what?"

"So as soon as I look at this big guy off to my side, I flash on the fact that I just took my eyes off the first one. So, I glance over to see if it was still there. It was, but sure enough, it was now on its feet and heading for the tree line. That's when I could see that it wasn't nearly as big as the one beside me. I could see that it was no bigger than I was. It might have been a little smaller than I am.

"Sounds like that could have been a juvenile," I offer.

"Well, whatever it was, it's on its feet and heading for the trees. I'm still standing there with my bow in one hand and my camera in the other. I look back at the big male and I'm about to wet my pants. But then I also think I should try to get a picture of this one. It was lots closer and lots bigger than the one that was getting away. So, I start to

raise the camera to my eye, and as soon as I do, I get this message. It wasn't spoken but it was loud and clear. It said, "If you take that picture, I'll kill you!"

"So what'd you do?"

"I lowered the camera, man!"

"Smart move, Rocky. A photo would be nice but it isn't worth getting killed over. Discretion is the better part of valor," I submit.

"Yup. That's pretty much the way I felt," Rocky replied.

"So, let me get this straight. The animal didn't speak to you but you got the message that you would be killed if you took the picture. How do you explain that?" I ask.

"I can't!" replied Rocky. "I absolutely can't. It looked me right in the eyes as I began to raise the camera and at that exact moment I knew I'd better not. It's like he was warning me not to, by sending me some kind of mental message. I don't know how to explain it but it just stopped me cold. It knew what I was about to do and it just wasn't going to let me take that picture. No way."

"What happened next?"

"At that point, I flashed on the first one that was going for the bait. I look over toward it just in time to see it disappear into the trees. Then I look back at the big one right near me, and it was gone! I couldn't believe it. It was there, and then, that fast, it was gone. No noises and no motion caught my eye. It just vanished. I remember thinking, 'Did I just imagine that?' Then, that fast, it's on my other side. Now it's standing behind the shrubs on my left, and he's growling at me! I can only see him from about the waist up and he's growling at me. Well that was it. I'd had enough. I was so scared I was about to wet my pants, again. I didn't think I would get out of there alive. I've seen bear. I've seen cougar. I've seen elk. And none of them ever had me scared. But these things had me REAL scared. I've never been that scared in my life, and I wasn't enjoying myself one bit. I was almost sure I was going to die. I turned my back on it and started running down the road."

"What happened to the other two that were making the noise behind you?" I remind him.

"I don't know and I don't care. I didn't ever see them and at that point I wasn't looking anymore. I just wanted outta there in the worst way you can imagine. I didn't stop running until I was almost to the car. I kept looking back behind me to see if they were following me.

Fortunately, they weren't. When I got to my car, I got outta there as fast as I could. When I got home I was still shaking. I'm never going back there again."

"Yes you are, Rocky. You're going back up there tomorrow. And I'm going with you."

Long silence.

It took a little more persuading but Rocky finally consented to a return trip, if for no other reason than to prove to me and himself that he wasn't going crazy. He hoped to be able to show someone else the creatures that had confronted him at point blank range and scared him worse than he had ever been scared before.

"Should I bring my bow?" he finally asked.

"No. Just a camera if you want."

Before dawn the next morning we met at the Blue Sky Mini-Mart and Gas Station outside the town of Grande Rhonde. We drove to the gate at the foot of the road and started to walk up the road.

"You watch," Rocky whispered. "Since I didn't bring my bow, we'll see the elk herd. That's the way these things tend to go."

I chuckled at the irony but then it happened. We climb the hill and break out into the clearing of an old clearcut and there in the middle of the road was six or seven elk! They turned their rumps to us and in the faint light before sunrise I could see the big heart-shaped white rumps of the Roosevelt elk descending the embankment on the left side of the road just fifty or sixty feet ahead of us.

"See! Just like I said! Whenever I don't bring my bow, I see the elk. I've been up here several times in the past couple weeks and haven't seen the herd. I figured they'd left. Guess not."

I could take reassurance in one thing. Rocky was every bit the sportsman and elk hunter he appeared to be. Someone can make up a story, but you can't make up an elk herd. It suddenly became still tougher to harbor the suspicion that Rocky was hoaxing me. It was still pretty dark, but not too dark to see a herd of elk dash off into the forest.

Just after the elk left, we both heard a single scream come from a distant ridge. We continued our walk up the logging road as the darkness faded and dawn broke. Rocky was visibly nervous and edgy. I've never before seen someone chew tobacco and smoke a cigarette at the same time.

When we got to the scene of yesterday's excitement, Rocky

seemed relieved to find a fairly ordinary situation. He showed me all the bent and twisted trees, which looked very much like the real deal to me. The twist-offs were clearly not the work of wind and weather. He relocated the indistinct footprints he found, the bed of ferns and tree boughs, and the place where he found the scat. Some of the scat was still lying there, pretty well dried out and decomposed. He showed me the power line easement where the trees had been cleared and where he left the apples. I took out my camcorder and taped Rocky describing the whole story, pointing to where the apples where, explaining where he was when he saw the first one, how he moved toward it, where the noises came from behind him and where the big one showed up beside him. It was still early but it was after sunrise and completely light as I videotaped Rocky's description of all the events he experienced. He had goose bumps on his bare arms as he described his encounter with the big male.

I was completely satisfied that the layout of the area was just the way Rocky described it in person and on the phone. In fact, I was impressed with how well everything matched the descriptions he offered. Certainly, this fellow was an experienced outdoorsman and a keen observer. He walked me all around the area, on and off the roads, and Rocky always knew what was going to be around the next bend. He never once failed to relocate a place where he had previously found an item of interest that he wanted me to see. There can be no doubt. Rocky really knew those woods and all of the finds he made were exactly as he described them.

Rocky wanted very badly for me to see something tangible that would support the story of his experience. As we explored the area he told me more than once that he wanted to prove to me that he wasn't crazy. And he tried. And despite the fact that the bigfoots didn't reappear for my benefit, I was also satisfied that Rocky wasn't crazy.

The apples were gone from where he left them and there were some indistinct scuff marks in the hard-packed earth around the spot. We found the twisted off trees, intermittently placed along abandoned logging roads. They were too high up for a person to reach, too large a diameter for a person to break, and in some cases the trees were so freshly broken that the leaves were still green on the broken treetops.

Rocky and I walked back to where we parked the cars. He was disappointed that he was not able to show me more concrete evidence of his incredible experiences of yesterday.

Trying to be positive, I said, "Hey, it's better that you didn't. If you had marched me out into the woods, and we'd both seen a furry, two-legged animal running for the trees, I would have suspected that it was all staged for my benefit. We saw about as much as I expected to see, which is not much. But that's better, because I know that bigfoots don't hang around for researchers like me to take video of with their camcorders. You did just fine, Rocky. I appreciate the time you spent showing me around your favorite hunting spot."

Was Rocky lying about his experiences so he could get attention or recognition from a middle school science teacher and sometimes bigfoot researcher? Definitely not. That is, not unless he is an operative for some sort of "Mission: Impossible" style ruse that went flawlessly, right down to the holographically-projected elk that crossed the road right in front of us.

Was Rocky misled or mistaken about what he saw? Highly unlikely. This wasn't some sort of fleeting "the thing that scampered across the road" style sighting as most bigfoot sightings are. This was easily the most detailed and involved multiple-bigfoot-sighting-at-close-range sighting that I had ever investigated. What he was claiming was truly extraordinary, yet the individual events he claims to have witnessed were completely consistent with the intimidation and evasion tactics that had been described by many other witnesses.

No one person had experienced so many in one event, to my knowledge, but nothing he described was completely new. Even the means of approaching the bait was consistent with reports and even the evidence we collected at Skookum Meadow, the details of which Rocky could not have known. He described a creature crawling in low to the ground when approaching obvious bait. This is exactly the way we suspected the creature approached our bait on Skookum Expedition. In Rocky's case, the creatures tried to distract him with noises from behind that would provide the juvenile in front of him a chance to escape unseen. I've heard from several other witnesses who lost track of the sasquatch they sighted under those identical circumstances. It seems to be a favorite trick of the sasquatches.

I would expect that someone who made up a story would not lay it on so thick. A hoaxer would make up a fairly ordinary kind of story that didn't stand out as anything too outrageous. A hoaxer would claim to have seen a bigfoot, but not seeing two bigfoots and hearing two more. With all the other details, Rocky's story is noth-

ing short of spectacular, not just for the number of bigfoots encountered, but for the rich trove of behaviors and strategies that are implied by the account. In less than a week he came up with a story that somehow fit the pattern but also took it to an entirely new level. Which is to say it's too good, too original, and too vivid to have been made up so quickly. If Rocky is making it up, then he is a genius of creative fiction and his talents are being wasted as a school building custodian in Wilsonville.

It comes back to Occam's Razor. That is, an elaborate ruse is not the simplest explanation. How did he get the live elk to show up in the first light of dawn, right on cue? How did he make the twisted-off trees? How did he know the area so well? Where did he get the powerfully smelly scat? Why did he spend two weeks and two meetings, one being a half-day walk in the woods, just to hoodwink a local science teacher? If one were going to invest that kind of time and energy on a scam, wouldn't it be focused on a media appearance or some monetary reward?

The simplest explanation is that Rocky Bounds is telling the truth, and that things happened pretty much just the way Rocky said they did. Anything else is much more improbable, much more complicated, and much less likely. I doubt Rocky has the time and the resources to stage the kind of hoax we are considering, and the motivation to do so just isn't there. I'm not an important enough person that anyone would target me as the victim of an elaborate hoax, and I don't believe that the world brims with pathological liars who are also tactical geniuses and skilled actors.

No, Rocky is on the level all right, if for no other reason than because the other possibilities are so improbable. But there are other things that support Rocky's account, chief among them being the fact that plenty of other folks have been through similar experiences. This was a rare case in which I was giving advice and information to the witness as the events were still unfolding.

What amuses me most about this incident is the fact that the real show took place only after Rocky was coached by a bigfoot researcher on anticipating and reacting to the standard bigfoot intimidation techniques. It must have been quite a surprise to the creatures that their standard distraction techniques did not work on this guy, and they apparently had to resort to back-up plans A, B, and C before something finally worked. In the process, the whole

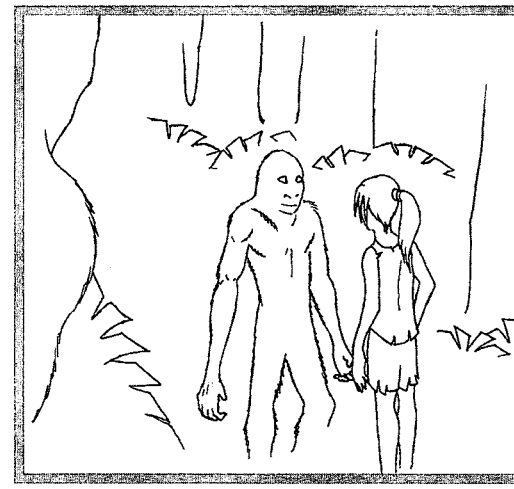
group of bigfoots had to step out of the shadows, when it would ordinarily require only one of their numbers to successfully intimidate the hapless human out of the area for good.

"The locals" won again, but barely. I'm guessing that they had a meeting after that episode to try and figure out why the usual intimidation procedures failed to work and why they had to pull out all the stops on this guy. Rocky gave them a run for their money because he was a very "quick study" and a very cool-headed field man. He almost got the photo we were after, but on the other hand, I almost got Rocky killed. (Let's not dwell on that fact, if you please.) Fortunately, Rocky knew just when to disregard the advice of the local bigfoot investigator in favor of simply saving his own skin. I can live without the photo, secure instead in the knowledge that we got an epic account out of the deal and that no one got hurt.

All's well that ends well.

chapter eight

The Guardians



Technically, it doesn't qualify as an alien abduction if you are not taken off the planet. If you are just taken to another place on this planet, and then returned to your "crib" (urban vernacular for "home"), then it would just be a terrestrial abduction. It would still qualify as abduction, and would be quite terrifying, even if it were at the hands of bigfoots, rather than space aliens.

The first known "terrestrial abduction" of a white guy is known to just about everyone who has ever read a book about the bigfoot phenomenon. Albert Ostman was a construction worker enjoying a primitive vacation to the Toba Inlet area of the British Columbia coastline in 1924. He was carried off by a sasquatch in his sleeping bag, transported to a steep drainage three hours away from his campsite, and held as either a hostage or an unwilling guest, depending on how you want to look at it. He was never returned to his camp. He had to flee on his own, which makes him more of a kidnap victim than an abductee. At any rate, he described his abductor as the patriarch of a sasquatch family group and his captors as all four members of that same family. After about a week, he made good his escape by sharing snuff with his captors, and then running off while the patriarch was gagging on an overdose.

John Green and Rene Dahinden both interviewed Ostman as to the details of his story. Danhinden emphasizes in his book *Sasquatch/Bigfoot* that Ostman recounted the tale several times with a consistency that Dahinden found to be persuasive. John Green brought Ostman before a Justice of the Peace named A.M. Naismith, who took a sworn deposition from Ostman. The fact that Ostman swore to the truthfulness of his story under oath is a rare

step for a sasquatch sighting witness and one that is seen by Green and Dahinden as lending a greater degree of credibility to Ostman's unprecedented account.

Dahinden's main problem with the account is that it is too good, which is to say it offers too much information about the creatures, too many observations, and implies too much intelligence on the part of the creatures to fit with the ape-like intellect that had been assumed by most researchers at the time. Language, social structure, and interest in Ostman's possessions suggested a level of intelligence that gave Dahinden pause, though he seemed to accept Ostman's story in the balance.

If Albert Ostman's account is to be accepted as truthful, then I hypothesize that there ought to be more stories like it, and modern researchers ought to uncover them sooner or later. Where there's smoke, there ought to be fire. Finding descriptions of such events that appear to be truthful is the only real way of verifying the authenticity of Ostman's account at this point. No matter how strange or rare the event, today's wider publicity given to the sasquatch hypothesis, coupled with superior electronic information gathering via the Internet, ought to reveal more such accounts. If this reasoning is correct, then Albert Ostman was telling the truth, for I have been able to locate witnesses who describe events that are every bit as strange as anything that happened to Albert Ostman.

Dora Bradley thought everyone had bigfoots in the woods around the home where they grew up. She certainly did, and she didn't particularly like it. They never harmed her. They just annoyed her. Bigfoots and snakes were her childhood enemies.

I spoke with Dora Bradley through her husband on 2/22/02. Dora is hearing impaired and so must converse on the phone through a person who can hear me and also use sign language to convey her thoughts and responses. Her husband Charlie served as this go-between in our conversation. It was a unique interview.

Dora explained (through her husband) that she grew up in an isolated rural household in Montgomery County, Missouri. She was one of eight children living in a rented two-bedroom house outside of Jonesburg. She often slept by an open window that had no window screen. Cornfields and woods surrounded the house she lived in. The limestone topography in that part of Missouri includes many

caves. There were caves around her childhood home, some of which were unmapped.

In the early 1960s when she was growing up, the bigfoots would sometimes annoy her. The fact that on summer nights, she slept near an open window without a screen didn't help. There were several times when she would awaken in the night and feel a large, leathery, hair-covered hand on her chest. She knew what it was. It was one of the bigfoots. She did not like the bigfoots. They smelled bad and they made her very uneasy, but she also knew from the many time she saw them that they would not hurt her.

Dora was not the only one who knew about the bigfoots. Her brother had also seen them often. Her sister once saw a gray one crossing the road. Her impression at the time was that it was an elderly bigfoot.

As a child of seven, Dora recalls a time when she, her brother, and another girl played with a juvenile bigfoot. While they were playing, Dora was aware of the presence of an unseen bigfoot, presumably an adult, who supervised the interaction with the human children from just out of sight. The juvenile bigfoot, recalls Dora, was very rough in its manner of play, and it hurt her at one point when it grabbed her around the shoulders. She also recalls that the juvenile smelled very bad. For both of these reasons, Dora was not very eager to play with the juvenile bigfoot again.

Dora also recalls one particular night when she was anxiously awaiting the arrival of her overdue father. Her father had a drinking problem and she was afraid that, in his inebriated state, he had crashed his pick-up somewhere.

Dora explained,

> "I stood in the den watching through the window in the door. As I looked outside, I saw a person cradled in two huge black arms as it moved into the spotlight in the front yard. I recognized the person as my father as he was set down and the bigfoot disappeared. He struggled to walk to the door. I screamed, and my mother came. I saw my father's conversation with my mother for a few minutes, and he was drunk and was in the pain from the accident. I never knew what he said to my mother. He might have told her about bigfoot besides his truck accident. His wrecked

pick-up was later found three miles away on the gravel road.

When I was seven years old, I woke up late one summer night. It was a full moon with a breeze. I found that I was lying on a bed made of sticks. I felt chilly because my back touched a cold cave wall. I saw my brother sitting on a stick bed across from me in the small cave. I smelled something unpleasant. I watched very hard and realized it was a dark bigfoot sitting about 5 feet from me. I saw another bigfoot digging a hole in the dirt. It picked up the small dark body of what might have been a dead infant and put it into the earth.

My brother stood up because the bigfoot walked toward us. It picked my brother up and walked away. I cried, and the bigfoot sitting next to me pulled me closer. It put my head on its chest. I felt its breasts when I pushed its chest. I thought it tried to nurse me the way my mother breastfed my baby sister. I took my head away from its chest and sat motionlessly on its lap.

I saw the other bigfoot come back. I stood up and it picked me up. I was like a football in its arm. I must admit I enjoyed riding because the bigfoot took big steps so gracefully. We went across the cornfield from the woods to my house. The bigfoot dropped me off in our garden. I looked back. It was half way across the cornfield toward the woods.

After the next time something like this happened I decided that I would not sleep next to an unscreened open window anymore. I smelled something bad out of my window. I felt the coarse, hairy, heavy hand resting on my chest. At first I thought it was a giant spider, but I felt a warm, leathery thumb, horse-hairy hand. I held my breath as long as possible.

It pulled me out of the window as if I was a rag doll. It car-

ried me into our front yard and went across the other side of the ditch beside the road. I saw five bigfoots sitting in the ditch. I was quite scared. The bigfoot put me on its lap. It hurt when it pulled on my hair. I watched in front of my house, and my parents' big window was still dark. I did not move for some time and might have dozed on its lap a couple times. I finally got up and walked away. I looked back and saw six bigfoots walking into the cornfield. That was when I was fifteen.

Another time we had some sightings of bigfoot in our cornfield or in our back yard, but very dark to see. We smelled them. On the night of my graduation I went home and cried because I lived in boarding school for the deaf for twelve years and it became my second home. I missed it. Everyone slept, but I cried quietly in my bed.

I saw bigfoot coming and sitting by my window. My bed was away from the window. I stopped crying fast and closed my eyes so hard because I did not want bigfoot to bother me anymore. That was my last time I saw bigfoot.

When I got married, my husband and I went to the theatre and watched the movie called "Bigfoot." I got excited because I learned the word bigfoot for the creature, and told him that bigfoots never harmed my family, unlike the movie. My husband looked at me. I asked him if bigfoot harmed his family. He said he never saw bigfoot. At first I did not understand because I thought bigfoots were common everywhere. I learned that they were not. I told him that my hometown had bigfoots. He asked me why no one reported bigfoot in my hometown. I asked my family about that. They asked me who would believe us. I am a little nervous about showing someone the burial. I want to, but I really don't want to see bigfoot again. I never like bigfoot. I want you to know that.

My brother said he saw bigfoot, but he was very quiet about it. He didn't offer any details. When he died a few years

ago, his wife told me that he told her some stories about bigfoot, himself, and me. I think he knew that night I was with a few bigfoots on the other side of the road and sat on the ditch in front of my house. The next morning I tried to tell my mother that, "a big stinky monster got me out of the window and carried me across the road to the ditch. I was forced to sit on the monster's lap. It pulled my hair. Then another monster took me and another monster took me. About four or five monsters. My hair is real hurt." My brother watched me talking to her. I lip-read him. He said to her, "I told you! I told you!" He might have seen through the screened door. He slept in the den where the screened door was. It was hot summer full moon night and the door was left open, but screened door was hooked (locked).

There are some more stories about bigfoot. They pumped our water well once in a while at night. One night my two older sisters woke me up and told me to look at the pond out of the window. I was able to see well on the full moon night. I looked at our pond like my sisters wanted me to, and saw bigfoot lifting our huge pig up real high. I pulled back out of the window and my sisters wanted to know, but I ran to my bed and covered my head with the blanket. Early next morning I got up and saw my daddy outside. He stood next to the motionless stiff pig lying on the ground near our garden. He looked at me. He pointed to our pond and to the ground where the pig was lying without breaking the electric wire. He couldn't figure it out. Also there was no bleeding or bites on the pig. I wanted to tell my daddy what I saw, but I couldn't speak. I did not see how bigfoot killed our pig. I watched my daddy pulling our stiff pig's hooves to the different place and buried it. My tears started flowing not because I felt sorry for pig, but I couldn't communicate. I was probably twelve years old."

-Dora Bradley

It's a remarkable set of events. If Rene Dahinden had heard those events, I doubt he would have had any trouble accepting Ostman's

less spectacular claims. On the other hand, if Dahinden found Ostman's claims to be improbable, he would have an even harder time accepting the chronicles of Dora Bradley. If this tale is legitimate, then there is a lot more than simple language and simple social structure in bigfoot communities.

If Dora did indeed witness the burial of a bigfoot about forty years ago, it would be helpful to revisit this location today and see what, if anything can be found. She was kind enough to send me maps of the location, which I have passed on to a local Missouri researcher. I'm not getting my hopes up, for forty years is more than enough time to decompose all the remains beyond recognition. Teeth are the most enduring parts of a human or animal body and the infant Dora saw entombed may not have had any teeth yet if it died at or just after birth. I am still waiting for feedback from the researcher who has promised to try and locate the site.

Without any remains to show, I still feel that Dora Bradley's account has provided a wealth of useful information and insight into sasquatch behavior. We are given a detailed chronicle of sasquatches behaving as virtual protectors of a rural household, to the point of getting the inebriated dad out of a car wreck in the ditch and dumping him in the front yard where he belonged. I don't think there are too many people who are creative enough to make up that kind of an event as an embellishment of a still stranger story. The account of Harry Oakes later in this chapter provides the suggestion of a pattern to this astounding claim. Then there is the matter of the child being lifted out the window and then going for a ride around the landscape, courtesy of the local sasquatches. Part of a night was spent in a cave, not just witnessing the apparent burial of an infant sasquatch, but also being coaxed into suckling as a surrogate offspring, perhaps as part of some sort of replacement therapy to a grieving mother sasquatch.

It must not be overlooked that we have an observation that supports the view that sasquatches bury their young, at least on this occasion. That may be the most important observation of all in that it offers an explanation for the relentless questions as to why we do not find sasquatch bones. Here is an observation that supports the view that they bury them. That is very important, and if Dora Bradley were feeding us a line on all of this, I would expect this to be a central focus of her story, rather than just another minor detail.

Then the children are returned to their property. I asked Dora to

elaborate on how the creature got her out the window and how she got back into the house without waking up the sleeping family members. She answered,

> First, it's not hard for an 8 ft. tall creature to lift a small child out of a window even when the sill is 6 ft in the air. When the bigfoot had me, I froze and wouldn't dare to scream. My dog wouldn't bark in bigfoot's presence. I saw him hiding in his doghouse. Returning is just as easy – and silent. Both the front and back screen doors were hooked but my window was open. I climbed into the window. I needed to use the feeding bucket to be able to get into the window. But I must be very careful not to make a noise because I was so afraid that bigfoot might hear it and get me back.

Did she really engage in unsupervised play with one of the local, juvenile sasquatches? Of course, it was not completely unsupervised. Dora recalled an awareness of a supervising adult sasquatch that was just out of sight. After amusing myself on the strangeness of that concept, it dawned on me. If the sasquatches were capable of getting the dad the last mile home, from the roadside ditch to the front lawn, then they might also be capable of acting as a guardian for certain members of a particular family that the sasquatches were enamored with.

The sasquatches weren't these sinister abductors of deaf rural children. They were definitely keeping an eye on things. They were "the locals," and the guardians. The sasquatches had their own personal issues to endure, such as the unexpected loss of a young one, but when they were around, they kept an eye on the children and sometimes the parents, too. Dora elaborated on this point:

> I think the bigfoots borrowed my brother and me that night when they lost their child. I think the other time the bigfoot's child got bored so they used my brother, another girl, and me for their child's playmates at night. Or bigfoots might want their child to have an experience with human beings. Definitely they supervised their child like we supervise our children. I think bigfoots took me out for a night social (in the ditch). When they had to go home, they left me in the ditch.

I think they knew I was old enough to walk across to my house.

What was it about this family that made them uniquely favored by the local bigfoots? In the first draft of this book I wondered whether the children were less supervised and more neglected than most. Dora adamantly rejected that speculation. In fact, she felt that the upbringing she experienced was very nurturing and wholesome. Dora likened her childhood to an episode of a TV show entitled, "The Waltons." They were very rural. They pumped water from a well. Firewood was stacked on the porch. Dad was very dedicated and very available for their needs. Dora insists there was nothing dysfunctional in her upbringing. Dad drank too much from time to time, but it was a fairly common manifestation of the post-traumatic stress syndrome that resulted from the unspeakable horrors of the World War II combat that he miraculously survived.

Perhaps the fact that one child was deaf was well understood by the sasquatches. This child required particular attention, but was more compassionately regarded by the sasquatches as a result. If the creatures had empathy, she would be the recipient of it. Dora was also more easily trusted by the sasquatches because she had such a limited ability to communicate with her family. After reading the first draft of this chapter she elaborated:

My experiences occurred only on full moonlight nights and I was always returned on the same night. That was when everyone, including me, was asleep and bigfoots had their opportunity. I wouldn't be surprised to find that bigfoots watched us everyday. I had a few experiences with them, but not everyday, and rarely during daylight.

My problem was communication and I agree with you that bigfoots knew my handicap and took advantage of it. I was fifteen years old when I told my mother about my experience with bigfoot. Not very long after that my grandfather, who was a carpenter, put screens on every window. Also my mother rearranged our beds and moved them away from the windows. That was my last time being taken by bigfoot.

If any of this is true, then according to the rule of recurring patterns that I endorse, other examples of similar scenarios ought to eventually surface. A blast of publicity for the sasquatch hypothesis precipitated a blast of sighting reports in 2002. On that year, a brief comment of just a couple paragraphs that was sent to the BFRO website caught my eye:

Tracy C. writes:

> "In early summer of 1989 we moved to a small town in western Ohio. I lived in the area all my life and never had any reason to believe until this. I'm the mother of four children. Being that it was summer, the three older children were usually still out in the yard playing while my two-year-old son was about ready for bed (8:00 pm). Every night for about a week, he wanted his bottle and to be put in his crib earlier and earlier each night, to the point where he was going to bed at 6:30 and sleeping until noon the next day. I didn't worry too much. Growing baby, right?
>
> One night, I heard him blabbering like babies do. When I went to peek in on him, I saw a pair of eyes move away from the window. Later, we started finding footprints outside his bedroom window. Still I wasn't too concerned till this went on for a few weeks. Then this happened: it was a Friday afternoon and I had bills to pay. It was about 12 or 12:30 noon and my son still hadn't woken up. When I went in to get him up, what I found shocked me to no end! My son was covered in mud as though someone had mud all over them and had carried my son on their hip. And there were long strands of hair throughout the mud. Needless to say, I put a deadbolt on the tops of the doors and made sure the windows were locked after that. Every night for a month or so, the roof was being pelted with small stones and we would hear screaming like a woman giving birth. Please tell me what you make of all this.

If I had not known of the Dora Bradley account, I would have not taken Tracy's sighting report seriously. After pondering the implications of the Dora Bradley matter for a year, I knew as soon as I saw

the report that the child was going for a ride around the neighborhood with the local sasquatches. I called Tracy on the phone and asked what her kid had to say today about a situation that happened ten years ago. She said she didn't know, because she didn't have custody of the kids and she was divorced. She promised to ask them next chance she had.

Tracy wanted to know why the house was pelted with rocks. That was an easy one and I think she already knew the answer: Whatever it was, it was expressing its displeasure about the fact that the child was now out of reach. Tracy offered another observation that bolstered her story a little more. Her young son's favorite toy at the time was a stuffed gorilla. The boy called the toy "my friend." More circumstantial evidence. You might say, a circumstantial anecdote: a story that supports the original story.

As utterly improbable as it seems to the rest of us, is does seem that a pattern has emerged which casts the local bigfoots in a role that is a strange combination of guardian and abductor. It seems that in rare instances, a bigfoot that is enamored with human children simply takes advantage of lapses in adult supervision to interact with the human child. If they take the child somewhere, they always put it back. I have seen no indication that it is violent, sexual, or dangerous. Rather, it is by all appearances, quite benign and even friendly. It should come as no surprise that no one believes a child who does happen to mention that a friendly monster is an occasional playmate: "Sure, kid. That's nice."

In order for Tracy's two-year-old to stay content from 6:30 p.m. until noon the next day, I would expect that someone would have to feed the child. Could it be then, that the bigfoots were performing this duty as well? (If we could just get them to change diapers, they would be welcome in every household with children on the continent.) Tracy's description of the puzzling events she witnessed made perfect and immediate sense to me in light of Dora Bradley's childhood experiences.

After reading the chapter and seeing Tracy's account, Dora had this insight to offer:

> I know it is not my story, but when I read Tracy's story, I thought that the point was that bigfoot were friendly, gentle, and non-threatening – at least to children. Also it shows that

adults are more easily frightened and maybe more capable of denial than children.

I think you have good evidence for bigfoots acting as a shadow neighbor, helping out people in the neighborhood when they can do it without being observed. I think also they don't frighten children like they do adults.

Dora Bradley

We would like to know whether there are still other, similar accounts from other verifiable sources. Indeed there is a wealth of comment sent to the BFRO website to the effect that bigfoots peer in windows, particularly when children are inside. The children may see the face and speak of the monster at the window, but they are not taken literally. Quite a number of such children have grown up and only in adulthood come to understand for the first time that is was a sasquatch who stuck its face in the window all those years ago. We get many reports that mention the suspicion that something very tall was looking in a window.

The first I heard of this phenomenon was from a rancher friend of mine named Scott Kitteridge. He lives in the ranch country of eastern Oregon but he knows a fellow who ranches in northern California. This fellow swore that a sasquatch was sitting on a flower bed that gave it a view of the TV by way of a picture window. Then there was Allen and April, the residents of the place where we put the cameras. They offered evidence that the bigfoots in their area were reaching into a window by day when nobody was home. Items that were in easy reach through the window were knocked to the floor, a curtain rod was torn down and earrings were missing from the dresser in their daughter Nina's room. Most people would be terribly spooked by the thought of such a possibility. Allen and April were OK with it. They had long ago lost their fear of the sasquatches and they were quite confident that no harm would come to them, so they just let it happen. We certainly tried putting cameras into those windows, but so far no luck.

Others may see them as crazy for tolerating a "peeping sasquatch." I agreed with Allen and April's feeling that they have no real cause for concern, and I admire their fortitude. This situation

might alarm virtually everyone else but they knew the pattern of behavior too well by that point to be concerned. Not only do sasquatches seem to pass on every opportunity to inflict harm on humans, but, as the accounts by Dora and Tracy suggest, they actually revere children and probably women as well. There are other accounts I have seen that support this. A few years ago, we got a message from a woman in Northern California. She was a mother and a rural resident living in a remote, northern California homestead. She recounted an episode in which she looked out the kitchen window to check on her daughter, while doing the dishes. To her horror, her young daughter was handing a cracker through the fence to a sasquatch, which stood on the other side of the tall fence that protected their garden from deer and elk. As any parent would do, she disregarded her own safety and dashed out of the house, screaming. The sasquatch retreated as she snatched up the child and dashed back in the house, sobbing and trembling with fear. The daughter looked at her in bewilderment.

"Why did you scare away my friend, mommy? I give him crackers all the time. He usually waits for me by the outhouse."

Another family who wished to remain anonymous took occupancy of a newly built home in a development that was situated on the edge of a large tract of forest in northern Minnesota. The children had mentioned to the parents on more than one occasion that there were monsters in the woods and they were even finding its footprints as they explored the woods. The dad, of course, did not take the statements seriously. Finally, mom was working in the garden one day and came to the terrifying realization that a hair-covered creature in the woods was silently watching her tend the garden. She gathered the kids and fled indoors. Once inside, she phoned her husband at work to tell him the distressing news. The kids heard the conversation and responded with a predictable chorus of, "We told ya so!"

That night, the dad followed the kids out to the woods and saw the tracks, precisely as the kids described. He wrote a message to the BFRO in search of advice on how to regard the local wildmen. Should he be concerned for his family? He definitely did not want bigfoot researchers coming around; he just wanted to know what to do about the monsters in the woods. As I recall, he was told they should move on, that his kids are probably in no particular danger,

and call us if anything changes. I remember being amused by one point that he emphasized: He would never again ignore the things his kids told him, no matter how improbable they seemed. I assume things worked out in the end. We never heard from him again. It is gratifying to think that the sasquatches seem capable of teaching us how to be better listeners.

Many other such situations have surfaced and they all seem to suggest that the word "monsters" is quite misleading. Sasquatches may be filling the role of guardians and protectors much more often than they are acting with menace. The Native Americans I have spoken with espouse the view that each one has a distinct personality. Some are cranky or downright dangerous, but most are not. They are generally benign, some even have a well-developed sense of humor, and most of them will step up to assist a human that is in genuine peril, especially if it is a child.

Like the cliché about policemen, they aren't always around when you need one, but the BFRO sighting report line has also received reports from those who claim that a sasquatch has delivered a lost hiker or child from death by exposure. I have seen a couple of these over the years, but the best-documented situation that I am aware of has been kindly provided by Henry Franzoni:

The Harry Oakes Story
By Henry Franzoni

Here's a story that's partially documented in the Portland *Oregonian*, and partially documented on channel 2 news (KATU) video tape, partially documented in *The Track Record* issue #18, and partially from Harry Oakes's personal recollections:

July 8-12, 1989:

> "On Friday, 3-year-old Joseph Edwin Leffler, disappeared from his mobile home on Squaw Creek Road, SE of Estacada. He told his mother he was going "fishing" (play fishing) on shallow Fall Creek, only 200 feet from the house. The boy was lightly dressed, wore sneakers, and had with him two adult, male, part dingo, part Australian Shepard

dogs, Dan and Jack, and a small white puppy." (The dogs were 2 1/2 years old, 9 months old, and 3-4 months old).

Harry Oakes, (a tracking dog handler, who represents the Mountain Wilderness Search Dogs, a volunteer, non-profit, Gresham, Oregon based search and rescue unit) and his search group were called in to hunt for the lost boy. At about 6 p.m., Harry's dog Ranger (and Harry and his partner) found tracks of the boy and his dogs a mile west of the boy's home, heading downstream through marshy ground on nearby Delph Creek.

Harry and his partner thought somebody was playing a joke. There was a series of barefoot, "four-toed," footprints, and the boy's tracks disappeared. They could see where something described as "huge" had been walking through the brush. Harry measured one track where there was a good imprint, not sliding, at 27"x10", with a five foot stride. The track was a half-inch deep in very hard ground. Weighing 125 pounds, Harry said he stomped on the ground with his boots and "couldn't make a dent." Ranger sniffed and ignored the bigfoot tracks, hunting for the boy's tracks, which had mysteriously disappeared near a roadway.

The 939th Air Force Reserve Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group had two helicopters with infrared video cameras that were taping Harry's progress while criss-crossing the area in a search grid. Harry said, "A report came in from somebody flying above... I won't say who, it gets too embarrassing, if you question the Sheriff's office they'll deny every bit of it...that their FLIR system, (Forward Looking Infra-Red), was being used, and about that time they noticed a huge object on the FLIR system something they've never seen before."

They wanted Harry to go check it out. Looking around the area, they did find tracks again, the same huge size that they had seen near the creek earlier. Questioning the FLIR operator later, Harry said that the operator told him: "I don't know,

the thing was huge... upright... walking... no, that's physically impossible to be that huge on the system. What do you think?"

About that time, little Joey walked up to Judy Magill, one of the Mountain Wilderness Search Team members just before noon on Sunday, in a wooded area near the base camp. "He stretched out his arms, and I picked him up," she said.

Harry said, "his first comment, besides that he was hungry, ...this was to KATU channel 2 news, on tape, before anybody could talk to him, was... a big hairy monster came and got him, and the three dogs, and kept them safe. Fed 'em berries (salmonberries, Harry later said you could see the place where the boy sat down before his prints disappeared), showed me where the creek was. They slept in a mining cave. And when the helicopter came up, he (the "monster") got scared and left, and he (Joey) took off too."

Beyond that, Harry was not able to question the boy as he was immediately helicoptered off to University Hospital in Portland, where he was checked and released about 7:30pm that night. There was no sign of hypothermia, and Harry said the dogs were credited with saving Joey's life by sleeping at night with the boy and keeping him warm.

In fact, Channel Two (KATU) News reported the boy's story, and showed the video of his arrival in camp, but prefaced the tape segment with, "the boy told a story the only way he could," (with eyes rolling, implying a unbelievably tall tale).

The rest of our local media, both television and newspapers, talked about the boy being saved by his dogs for the following week. Big local story, everyone was happy about Joey being found alive and well and being saved by his dogs... and that's the way it's remembered in these parts... by most people.

No one else believed little three-year-old Joey's story of the "monster," except Harry and his partner.

One must admit it is quite a kind and thoughtful gesture to usher a child out of the woods, particularly for a creature that is variously portrayed in the Bible and mythology as a monster or the Devil. It's a pity there aren't more of these creatures around to assist the dozens of hikers that lose themselves annually in the forests of the Pacific Northwest. One wonders just how desperate the situation has to become before "the locals" will step from the shadows and render assistance to the human in distress.

The sighting report by Tarry Miller of Sweet Home, Oregon may shed some light on this question. Tarry is a very experienced hunter and former outfitter who was deer hunting on the west side of the Mount Jefferson Wilderness on October 12, 2002, when he seriously injured his shoulder. He had just shot a big buck when he fell and dislocated his shoulder. In his disabled condition, he was forced to spend an unplanned night in the woods and, for most of the night, he could make out the outline of a large creature that was keeping a careful eye on his situation.

Tarry writes:

> I was on Maxwell View out of Mount Jefferson. I had shot my deer and I lost my balance and fell about thirty feet down, dislocating my right shoulder. I was alone. This was around 10 a.m. I managed to gut out my deer and try to pull it down to the Maxwell trail. After passing out several times because of pain, I decided to spend the night out there. I located a spot were I could burn a big snag to keep me warm through the night. By the time the snag was on fire, it was dark. I could see a dark figure watching me the whole night. I tried several times to relocate my arm but with no luck.
>
> The next morning at dawn, I started to mark my trail back out with sticks. After making a sling for my arm, I managed to walk to the Seven Lakes Trail. I did not have the strength to continue up hill but it was the only way out. I finally hit the Duffy Trail, which was the trail out of the wilderness.

When I was resting I could see a dark blondish colored female bigfoot approaching me. I could tell the gender because of her breasts and she was not as hairy as the male. She had feminine features, her face was more slender looking than the male, and she looked very, very human. I did nothing but sit and let her come near. She got within fifteen feet of me. I could see her face, her eyes, and her body. In her eyes, I could tell that she had no intentions of harm. She wanted to help me.

After a few minutes of contact with the female I heard two backpackers approaching the trail. When I turn to look at her, she gently turned and walked back into the trees. When the backpackers were helping me, there was a male bigfoot watching from the trees. He was approximately 8 feet tall, stocky build, and darker-colored hair. He was almost black, but he could blend in with the tree bark really well. As the backpackers were helping me out, the male bigfoot was keeping an eye on me. I could tell this because I could hear him walking ahead of us, by a hundred yards or so. I could tell where he was all the time.

I asked the backpackers if they believed in the bigfoot. They said they thought it was a hoax, so I kept my sighting to myself. The bigfoot followed us all the way to the trail head. From there, I went to the hospital.

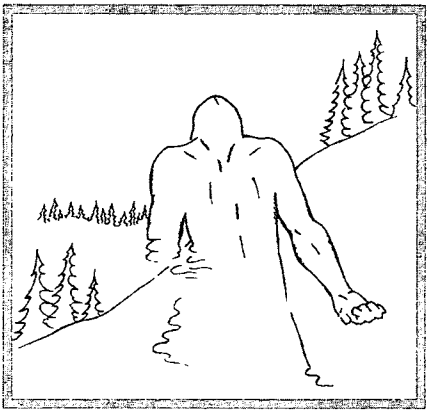
One has to wonder what might have happened if the backpackers had not happened along. I asked Tarry whether he thought the bigfoot was getting ready to assist him in some manner, perhaps by escorting him to the trailhead. Tarry could not be sure, but he did reiterate the feeling that the creature had a look of compassion and concern in her eyes. He felt that she wanted to render some kind of assistance. Unfortunately for the hikers, *not* believing meant *not* seeing. Had they been more open-minded about the possibility of bigfoots, Tarry told me he would have pointed out for their benefit the creature that was peering out at them from behind a tree. Since they expressed such skepticism, Tarry decided not to say anything that might cause his would-be rescuers to drop him and flee in terror.

Fiction writer Molly Gloss has written a wonderfully descriptive novel *Wildlife* (Simon & Schuster), which portrays a lost female traveler who is delivered from a dire situation by the local sasquatches. Gloss' treatment of the sasquatch reflects a keen sense of the compassion that these creatures have been known to exhibit toward children and sportsmen in distress. Everything she describes fits the pattern of behavior that is described in these genuine accounts. In many ways, the events described in this chapter are even more remarkable than Ms. Gloss' fictional account. In bigfoot matters, truth is often stranger than fiction.

I am particularly grateful to Dora Bradley for taking the time over several conversations and letters to relate her remarkable childhood experiences in great detail. Dora then spent the additional time reviewing and correcting my descriptions of her experiences until I got it right.

chapter nine

Vanishing Act



Alex and his cousin both froze when they saw the creature moving through open expanse of the clear-cut. Alex had a rifle in his hands when he saw it but he never considered shooting it. It was close, it was big, and it was walking on two feet. Worse yet, it knew they were there, though it didn't seem too concerned about them. Then they found out why. It turned away from them, began walking then momentarily shimmered like it was enveloped in the heat waves that rise over the desert. Then, right before their eyes, the bigfoot vanished. Gone. Tracks in the soft earth were all that remained and they led right to the place where it vanished, then they ended, too.

This bizarre event took place on the second day of a hunting trip in Oregon's Coast Range Mountains on an overcast October day in 2000. Alex Summers and his cousin drove to an area near Banks, Oregon as they had in years past. They continued to the village of Timber, took a left and climbed an overgrown dirt road into a thick, brushy forest of replanted Douglas fir. It had rained the day before and the ground was wet on the cloudy but dry day. It was mid-afternoon, about 3 o'clock as they crept through the forest, rifles in hand, and came upon a large clear-cut.

As Alex describes the incident:

> We saw something that I would describe as a possible Neanderthal. It was about twenty feet from us (my cousin and me). It stopped, and turned around. My cousin and I froze. I felt a sense from it that we didn't belong there. The creature was about eight feet tall. I am 6'4", and my cousin is about 6'6" And that creature was taller than both of us and it was thicker in the body as well. Massive would probably be a bet-

ter description. It had black hair, not fur, hair, and a strange head. It reminded me of the sagittal crest on a Great Ape. It was somewhat dome shaped. The creature's eyes were black, with no whites showing. And it had a strong, musky odor coming from it, like garbage, or a decaying animal. It was definitely intelligent. It studied us intently as if trying to assess what level of threat we posed to it. I could not tell if it was male or female, as its hair covered any type of distinguishing anatomical features. The only part of it not covered in hair was its hands, the soles of its feet, and its eyes. Its weight was approximately 500 or 600 pounds, and as I have stated, it was massive. It was bipedal, and was walking in an upright fashion. It was in a strange way human-like. I had a .300 Winchester Magnum, and my cousin had a Winchester Model 94 .30-30 rifle. Yet neither of us could shoot it. It was too human-like. It surveyed us for about one minute, and then it turned around and started walking toward the other side of the clear-cut.

If you wish to believe this next part is a joke, that's fine. My cousin and I were not drinking, nor were we under the influence of any drugs. We are not liars, or given to wild delusions. We never sought media attention, or "fame." But as sure as I live, that creature disappeared right in front of us!

Have you ever seen in a desert setting, off in the distance, when the heat rises from the ground…the blurry, wavy lines? That is what the creature did. It started shimmering, and became almost transparent, and totally disappeared. The creature left tracks in the ground, and appeared totally solid during the encounter. I am not joking. My cousin and I were stupefied, to say the least. We stared at the tracks for about 20 seconds, and we left. We felt like we were being watched the entire time we retreated. I also wish to state for the record that we felt like we were not wanted there. Neither he nor I ever have or ever will return to that place.

Alex is a former Navy SEAL and a Gulf War Veteran. I spoke with him a couple times and we e-mailed back and forth a few more times.

He never showed any interest in publicity and did not want his report posted on the BFRO website no matter what we thought of it. He was interested only in knowing if any other such reports existed.

Before we spoke, he had contacted another local researcher in the Portland area, just after the incident happened. He described that contact as frustrating. He reported the event to Ray Crowe's organization, the *Western Bigfoot Society*, which has been recently globalized and renamed the *International Bigfoot Society*. Ray found Alex's account intriguing enough to refer it to longtime researcher Peter Byrne, who happened to be in town at the time. Peter spoke with the witness, but when Alex got to the part about the bigfoot disappearing, Peter started to have his doubts about the whole story, and told Alex as much.

Alex found me months later through the BFRO website (June, 2001). If Alex's account had been the only one of its kind, I would have probably tossed it just like Peter Byrne did. But one thing has to be said for being a curator on the BFRO website: One sees hundreds of reports every year. Along with developing a facility for spotting crank reports, one also gets the chance to pick up on patterns that emerge around some very obscure aspects of alleged bigfoot behavior. Seeing a bigfoot disappear in plain sight is mighty rare but a pattern has emerged around such reports and the witnesses do not appear to be kooks or liars.

This disappearing bit was as odd as it gets but it wasn't without precedent. Alex's was one of the most vivid claims and he apparently had an uncommonly unobstructed view, but there certainly were other reports that made similar claims. And, as with Alex, they are sober, articulate witnesses who were making themselves available to serious researchers. I have also found other witnesses who saw such things but are very reluctant to mention them. The reason for this should be obvious enough once you know how Peter Byrne reacted to Alex Summers' report. My own tendency before talking with Alex was to assume that the witness was momentarily distracted or to suppose that the bigfoot was so fast that the witness didn't see it run away.

The first bigfoot eyewitness I met upon moving to Clackamas County, Oregon was Billy Reed. His sighting, which occurred in the Mount Hood National Forest outside Portland, ended in an alleged disappearance. Billy was then the college-aged son of a career Forest Service employee. The Reed family boarded a couple horses on my

property so they were over at my place a lot tending the livestock. Billy is married and now lives nearby in Colton, Oregon. Back in 1988 when I was still building my house, he was over tending the horses. We got to visiting and I had just read Peter Byrne's book on bigfoot. I asked Billy, a life-long rural resident and avid outdoorsman, what he thought of the whole matter. His eyes widened and he told me of an experience that happened at Bagby Hot Springs:

Billy and a few friends rumbled up the forest roads to the hot springs on a warm summer night. Bagby Hot Springs is a notorious gathering spot for afterhours parties that are attended by rowdy Clackamas County locals, and I'm sure Billy fit right in. Still, they had just arrived and the party had not yet begun. They still had to hike the one mile trail through the majestic stand of tall firs to the hot springs. As they were getting ready to head up the trail, Billy had the sighting, which thoroughly rattled the other members of the group, and which ended with the bigfoot-style creature stepping behind a small tree on the edge of the parking lot and vanishing. Billy, true to his fearless nature, immediately approached the tree without much hesitation. But there was no longer anything there.

Back in 1988 when Billy told me this, I was not yet cataloging sighting reports. I would have dismissed the entire report as delusional if I did not know Billy as a neighbor and a very competent outdoorsman. Certainly, the fact that he was up at Bagby Hot Springs, presumably to party, did not make him the most reliable witness ever. Alcohol was most likely involved. Still, I did not doubt that Billy saw a bigfoot. The Collowash River, a tributary of the Clackamas where the hot springs are located, is heavily forested, remote, and has had numerous sightings over the years. At the time, the only part of Billy's report that I doubted was the ending.

Inwardly, I supposed that fear, beer, fading daylight, or clever moves by the creature combined to cause Billy to lose track of it. Though I never forgot Billy's insistence that the creature disappeared, I always inwardly supposed Billy was mistaken and that it simply ran away very quickly. Ten years later I was seeing a steady flow of sighting reports on the BFRO website and a pattern began to emerge that suggested that disappearing bigfoots may not be a simple matter of misperception. I reconsidered my dismissal of Billy's claim and decided to give him a call just to hear his account anew. Billy is a furrier (horse shoe-er) by trade and he visits a lot of remote Clackamas

County homesteads in his line of work. Billy has seen me on the TV doing my schtick as a bigfoot researcher so he knows of my ongoing interest in the topic. Whenever we meet, he always has a couple of new reports that he has gathered from his customers in various parts of rural Clackamas County. Someone's trailer gets a nasty shake in the middle of the night. Someone loses most of the apples off their tree in a single night and finds deep, barefoot tracks in the soft earth the next day, and so forth. Eventually, I asked him about the sighting at Bagby Hot Springs. He retold the story and he insisted that the creature disappeared, literally, not figuratively.

There are other such reports with verifiable witnesses behind them. A career wildlife biologist in California saw a bigfoot vanish in 1993. He still works for the Forest Service and he does not want his name mentioned. I was able to confirm his standing in the U. S. Forest Service through other Forest Service acquaintances. At the time of his sighting, the biologist was conducting an amphibian survey downstream of Bloomer Lake in the Stanislaus National Forest. He related this account:

> First, I recall finding the remains of a fawn in the meadow I was surveying. As I continued to conduct my survey, perhaps thirty minutes or so afterwards, I noticed movement off to my right. What I saw was what appeared to be an animal covered with black, semi-long hair (two to three inches, to guess), walking upright (fully) with a gait somewhat like current hominids; and approximately five to six feet in height and weighing one hundred seventy-five to two hundred twenty-five pounds. I saw something move for two to three steps. It did not appear to go anywhere, just vanish out of sight. It did not look at me or react to my viewing, it just simply appeared and then vanished.
>
> To some extent I was not really paying attention to my surroundings, as I was focused on my work; but was enjoying the surroundings in that field sort of way. I recall thinking that it looked like an upright creature walking through the woods. I tried to repeat my last movements, to see if what I saw was a play on light and shadows. I was not able to recreate any likeness of what I had seen - the light and shad-

ow of the forest did not seem to be the source of my observation.

I did not hear anything before, during, or afterwards, in regards to the sounds that one might hear if someone were walking in the woods stepping on branches or simply rustling the ground. I did not take an active interest or pursuit, as I was uncertain of what I think I really saw; I am skeptical by constitution; not only for mythologies, but in general.

I replayed the event in my mind while I finished the survey. And I occasionally looked in the general vicinity of the area of where I saw the animal-creature-mythological being. I finished my survey and left the area.

While I was returning upstream, approximately one hundred meters from the meadow, I came across an exhausted buck—two or three years old lying on the ground near the creek. "I was able to approach and touch the deer. I clearly recall brushing flies off his head and sitting next to him for a couple of minutes and thinking this is pretty cool! I was curious about the deer and did think about what I had seen in the meadow.

I then proceeded upstream again. Approximately one hundred fifty meters from the buck, I came across a mass of tissue, which looked to me like an aborted fetus. Upon further investigation, I discovered that it was the entrails of an animal. Very fresh. I then looked behind me and saw a freshly killed doe. Her eyes were still clear and there were no flies or maggots on or in the carcass. As I examined the doe I could find no sign of struggle. I was unable to locate any apparent method of kill by another animal; thinking of a cougar, which usually will bite at the base of the skull or that general area. I found no such evidence. The carcass was left fully in the open. What I did notice was that the right leg had been cleanly ripped off from the main body to include a couple of ribs. There was no blood anywhere. I looked around as my in-the-woods instincts were quite active. There was that sixth sense

of a presence. I spent awhile running all of the pieces through my head. I then continued to hike out to Bloomer Lake, taking the experience with me.

This sighting is typical of the fairly vague way these disappearances are described by most people who witness them. When I first saw this report, I was impressed by the precision of the descriptions but I logically assumed that the bigfoot simply ducked, ran away, or otherwise concealed itself. This biologist is, by all evidence, a very keen observer and has a good head for details. Still, what this report lacks is a clear, unobstructed, close range view of the creature. There were a couple other aspects of this account, namely the deer, which strongly supports the idea that this person did have a bigfoot encounter. Finding mutilated deer or mysterious gut piles are occurrences that have been described by many bigfoot sighting witnesses. Bigfoots have been seen to nab a deer by tripping up its back legs the same way a cheetah drops a Thompson's gazelle on the Serengeti savannahs. Then the bigfoot will brutally pull the leg from the deer to immobilize it. It is thought that bigfoots eviscerate deer because they prefer the liver to the other internal organs, since it is an especially rich source of nutrition. The witness did not inventory the organs that he found in the "gut pile' but it would be my guess that the liver was gone.

Then there was the buck. The young buck found by the biologist was alive but seemed to be exhausted or in shock. The biologist was able to approach and touch it. This resembles other accounts I have seen from several campers who have witnessed very weird and very loud creature calls in the woods. Soon afterward, they report a deer walking right into their camp and lying down. Witnesses to this behavior surmise that the deer was so afraid of whatever was making the menacing noises that it chose to take its chances with the campers, who may afford a measure of refuge from whatever constitutes the threatening presence in the woods.

In July of 2001, I followed up on another sighting report that emphatically stated that a bigfoot was sighted, and then it disappeared. In this case, it was said to have stepped behind a tree, just as in Billy Reed's account. This time the report came from a horseback rider living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The witness was riding in a forest of jack pine, which are thin trees that grow in dense stands

and are prone to wildfire. In fact, jack pine relies on fire to complete its reproductive cycle: the cones containing the seed remain tightly sealed unless a fire heats the cone just short of combustion, at which point they open up and release the seed inside.

The witness, Vicki Ostlund, was riding through the jack pine forest on her white horse, which bore the not-so-original name of "Silver." She claims to have seen a white bigfoot. This would seem to be a preposterous claim to those unfamiliar with bigfoot matters, but anyone who has been researching sightings for a while has likely seen at least one report of white bigfoot. There was a rash of such sightings in western Oregon and western Washington that had such similar descriptions that it was generally assumed to be the same creature that was working its way northward. Numerous reports of a white bigfoot also originate from Ohio and Indiana.

There are three reasonable possibilities for how a white bigfoot could come to exist, given the ostensible fact that most bigfoots are a shade of brown or reddish-brown:

a) It may be adaptive wintertime coloration that serves as camouflage in the snow.
b) It may be a very old individual that has lost its hair color due to age, as in aging humans.
c) It may be some kind of mutation due to inbreeding within a small population. That is, it may be an albino bigfoot.

In any case, what Vicki saw on her horseback ride may be best described in her own words:

> Even though this was years ago, I remember it like yesterday, because it was so bizarre: When Silver put his head up to see the creature coming towards us, I felt the creature thought Silver was one of them, as he came right towards us, not noticing me on his back, I am assuming. Kind of led me to believe there were more of them in the area, and white too.... The pine forest he was in were tall thin jack pine, but quite thickly forested. When he came in real close to where I was, he must have noticed we weren't familiar to him, and he turned, running sideways towards some trees. All of a sudden, he just disappeared. He didn't come out on

the other side of the tree, but just vanished. I was thinking he could have run back straight, but the trees weren't that large, like his whole body could hide behind it, and it was strange I didn't see him running away from me at all... just sideways, then behind the tree and gone. I guess that is what gave me the creeps more than anything else I observed. Like I said before, it was going on dusk, and even though there was sufficient daylight for me to follow in a ways, I was too scared to do it. It was totally silent, too. I didn't hear him breathe, break twigs, nothing...just quiet woods.

Knowing Silver stopped dead in his tracks to watch this thing gave me comfort as I know even though there wasn't another human observing this thing that Silver reacted to it. So, I know he saw it, too. I have seen albino deer and honestly that is what I thought it was, as I knew I was already on Silver. BUT when there was no large body jutting out behind it, I knew it was something all together different. I tell everybody I saw an albino sasquatch, as I can't explain it any other way. I truly believe I saw something very unique, and have since looked into the site and read the other Upper Peninsula sightings stories. Nothing else seems to be like my sighting, though. There was one in Marquette County years back, though.... maybe only footprints and strange sounds? Not sure, and I guess it doesn't matter. My family teases me, but I know what I saw and no one can convince me otherwise...

Up to this point, everything has been a story. Is there any other evidence that supports the assertion that bigfoots are capable of disappearing? The best evidence that I have seen is a piece of video shot by Paul Freeman in eastern Washington in which a bigfoot that Paul was filming at fairly close range vanishes in the midst of the excited, jittery panning and wiggling of Paul's amateur camerawork. Freeman is as experienced a bigfoot tracker as there is, but unfortunately he is not much of a videographer. As usual, the video leaves much to be desired.

In any event, Freeman was well known to Dr. Grover Krantz, and since Krantz was more of an academic than a field man, he relied on

people like Paul Freeman to keep him posted on field matters. Paul spent his career as a ranger for the Bureau of Land Management in the expansive, remote, and decidedly off-limits Mill Creek Watershed. The watershed supplies drinking water for a few eastern Washington cities and is an arid wilderness that straddles the border of eastern Washington and Oregon. Paul's job was to patrol the watershed and be on the lookout for intruders, fires, or other problems.

Freeman had a number of sightings around the Mill Creek Watershed, as well as hair finds, numerous track finds, a hand impression, and the short piece of video of a bigfoot. Freeman was able to track the whereabouts of individual bigfoots that frequented this area on the basis of their unique footprint features.

I visited Paul once at his house and he was over to my house once, and I am satisfied that, despite his Arkansas drawl and calmness that borders on indifference, he is completely on the level. I had never seen a cast of a bigfoot hand print, and now, thanks to Paul, I own one. Paul gave it to me, along with a couple of tracks casts, when he and his wife came to my home to be interviewed for a bigfoot documentary that was being put together for European release. The rest of his extensive collection of artifacts was sold to Dr. Jeff Meldrum of Idaho State University in Pocatello, Idaho. Paul sold a copy of his video to an English production company, which they dubbed at my house. I watched the clip numerous times and was quite impressed.

The clip is important to this discussion because Paul manages to accomplish a near-impossibility: he gets a bigfoot on video tape. He did it by staking out a certain spring in the area. Springs are important to all creatures in an arid wilderness like the Mill Creek Watershed, and Paul had been watching the spring for weeks. He would head up in the early morning, always bringing his video camera with him in hopes of catching something good on tape. On this particular day, Paul arrived much later than usual due to some sort of problem with his daughter's car. When he arrived, he saw evidence that a creature had just been there: the spring was running muddy as if the water had just been disturbed and fresh tracks led off into the woods. Paul turned on the camera, followed the tracks a short distance along a dusty path, then scanned the woods around the spring with his camcorder.

Sure enough, a bigfoot steps out from behind a tree, carefully walking across the field of view from right to left. It is intent on where it

is placing its feet but it glances briefly in the direction of the camera. Then it steps behind a small fir tree that looks to be about a dozen years old. It pauses behind that tree and for the time that it stops moving, the bigfoot becomes virtually impossible to see. The camera jiggles as Paul steps toward it. Then it moves again from behind the small tree and it is again visible in the video. More camera jiggling as Paul steps toward it. Paul moves toward the subject with the camera on his eye and he pans downward to see his footing through the viewfinder. He quickly pans back up to regain the view of the bigfoot, but the bigfoot is gone. He spends the next few minutes of the tape panning the woods with his camera but he never gets another shot of the bigfoot. That was the end of the sighting. "Where did it go?" he repeatedly asks on the tape. He expresses bewilderment on the tape as to how the creature managed to clear the area so quickly and so quietly.

Finally, we must return to the seemingly far-fetched account of Rocky Bounds in Chapter Six. Particularly troubling is the part of the episode in which Rocky was being confronted by a big male creature that stood about forty feet distant. In the instant he took his eyes off of it, the creature disappeared, leaving Rocky so confused that he began to wonder whether he had imagined the entire event. A moment later, the big male reappears on the other side of Rocky's position.

In this case, the witness is claiming to have seen a bigfoot disappear then reappear at a new position not far from where it vanished. By the time I met Rocky, claims of disappearing bigfoots were nothing new. In Rocky's case, in Paul Freeman's case, and in several other instances, the creature seemed to vanish the moment the witness takes their eyes off of it. It had become such a pattern that I made a point of warning Rocky not to take his eyes off a creature once it was in view.

There are many reports in the BFRO database that end with a statement to the effect that the creature disappeared. That could be interpreted in one of a couple different ways so that need not trouble an investigator and it usually does not. If a rare witness emphasizes the specific details of the disappearance the way Alex Summers did, then the report is generally assumed to be fictitious, and it will probably not be investigated. There would likely be a few more such reports in the on-line database if they were not discarded, as they usually are.

The "in-house" designation for such reports is "paranormal/UFO" which is a dustbin of uninvestigated sighting reports.

I find that I'm often snatching reports out of the dustbin, only to find that they include full contact information, and a very sincere witness that is willing to discuss the incident at length. When I go to the trouble of contacting such witnesses, they are surprised, relieved, and grateful that there is someone who is willing to weigh their account after listening to it. As witnesses go, they end up being at least as articulate and available for interview as any other kind of bigfoot sighting witness. Naturally, any skeptic would argue that no bigfoot sighting witness is reliable, but that is not such an easy view to hold to after talking to a lot of these witnesses. There is much more sincerity and consistency that comes across from witnesses who are willing to be interviewed, even when the claims are extraordinary.

I was much too scientifically oriented to consider such bizarre claims when I got involved in organized research of the bigfoot phenomenon. I found myself ignoring such claims when I did encounter them. I had read Krantz' seminal volume on bigfoots and I concurred with the view that the creatures were simply a species of reclusive "wood ape" that inhabited temperate rain forests. Eventually, I became aware of the schism that divided opposing factions of bigfoot researchers, who were polarized into "camps." The scientific-minded ones favored organizations like BFRO. Theirs was the "FaB" camp (Flesh and Blood). On the other side was a "paranormal" camp, which attributes certain supernatural powers to these creatures. They feel that bigfoots possess the ability to do things like "shape shift." That is, they can change from one kind of animal or object, to another. They feel bigfoots can change appearances, turning into another animal, or into an inanimate object (like a stump) for purposes of concealment. Bigfoots are also said by the paranormal folks to be "interdimensional" beings, whatever that means. I think it means that when sudden disappearances of bigfoots have been observed, it is concluded that the bigfoots enter some other mystic dimension when they vanish from view.

Perhaps "paranormal" is a poor choice of words to characterize this camp. It is almost seen as a put-down because it is implicitly used to discredit that perspective. "Preternatural" (inexplicable by ordinary means) may be more precise. One definition of paranormal is: "not scientifically explainable." Not a big difference, really. Either way,

this is definitely true when it comes to claims of disappearing bigfoots, though it is also accurate for pretty much the entire bigfoot phenomenon. Truth be told, science has not succeeded in quantifying any part of the bigfoot phenomenon, which is why the matter remains a myth in the eyes of most scientists. Even a "quasi-scientific" bigfoot researcher has very little nailed down right now.

That's the amusing part of it. Bigfoot, at this juncture, is paranormal, through and through. Yet, within the "bigfoot research community" things are factionalized to the point where "paranormal" is seen as a dirty word to some, and definitely something apart from the focus of the Flesh and Blood (FaB) contingent. Meanwhile, the "paranormal" camp focuses on the potentially mystical aspects of bigfoots, which *do* seem to surface often enough in the anecdotal data that I now suspect they have a point.

To be fair, the "paranormal camp" would say that they do not *focus* on the paranormal aspects of bigfoots, but they do *acknowledge* them, much to the dismay of the Flesh and Blood contingent. The obvious complaint of the FaB camp is that any discussion of paranormal powers serves only to remove any hope of gaining the non-existent credibility that the bigfoot subject currently lacks in the eyes of the mainstream media. The bigfoot subject will not get any real scientific consideration until it is publicly endorsed by a few more academics, and an academic must adhere for the most part to the flesh-and-blood paradigm. That does not leave much place for discussion of the really weird aspects to the bigfoot phenomena (outside the anthropology department's Friday happy hour).

After years of studying the phenomenon and trying to listen to credible witnesses with a totally open mind, I now understand what the paranormal crowd is advocating. I also see how mortifying it must be to the FaB advocates to see any consideration at all of something that will never be embraced, much less investigated, by mainstream science. The paranormal camp has been aware of the utterly inexplicable aspects of bigfoot behavior and they have had to come up with a fuzzy but acceptable paradigm that explains them. Interestingly, the Native American view of the bigfoot phenomenon tries to do the same thing, and the upshot of their view is that bigfoots are *both* flesh-and-blood *and* spirit, which would imply that both schools of competing thought are correct. In that case, it may be more than just a coincidence that Rocky Bounds' sighting happened near Spirit

Mountain on the edge of the Grande Rhonde Reservation in Yamhill County. Spirit Mountain is regarded in tribal lore as a place to go to encounter spirits of deceased relatives. What that has to do with sasquatches is even less clear.

This need not imply that bigfoots have supernatural powers. It may simply mean that they are masters at creating a distraction, and astute at using the distraction to flee in an unexpected direction. And above all else, and they must be capable of moving very fast when they want to flee. These skills alone suggest a highly evolved degree of intelligence that is well beyond what most researchers are willing to afford these creatures. Most researchers ascribe to the view that we are dealing with some offshoot of the Great Ape, or Pongidae family, specifically *Gigantopithecus blackii*. While the great apes are indeed fast, they are not generally viewed as able to employ a sophisticated form of distraction and evasion that borders on illusion. Yet, this must be one of the simplest explanations for how bigfoots manage to disappear. Perhaps the simplest form of distraction that could provide cover for a disappearing act is the infrasound mechanism that Vaughn Hughes suggested in Chapter Three. If infrasound can cloud vision and disorient a human, then it would offer the necessary cover for a disappearing act.

While it is the simplest explanation, it is not a very good fit when held against the accounts of Alex Summers and company. Alex is claiming that footprints were evident in the soft earth of the clearcut right up to the point where the creature disappeared. Brian Smith, an eastern Washington researcher and tracker has found multiple track runs that inexplicably end in the middle of open, plowed fields. Vicki Ostlund saw the creature step behind a tree that was too skinny to conceal a creature as broad as the one she saw. Considering the fact that these claims are so puzzling, and the fact that they are so different from a typical sighting, it is indeed tempting to dismiss the reports as some sort of aberration, or some sort of misperception of a more easily explained situation.

In the interest of leaving no stone unturned, let us accept for a minute the possibility that all of the people with "disappearing bigfoot" stories are not crazy or lying. For the sake of argument, let us entertain the possibility that the creatures really do have such a trick up their hairy sleeve. Considering such a possibility has one important benefit: it offers another possible explanation for why we have

failed so utterly at capturing, or killing, or even getting good video footage of a bigfoot. Conversely, if these creatures do *not* possess such impressive powers, then there is no good excuse for not having collected more evidence on them by now. We could argue that we don't have good evidence for another reason: because they don't exist! The problem with that view is that it takes us back to the question posed in Chapter One: If bigfoots don't exist, what explains the persistent and consistent reporting of sightings, track finds, and so forth by verifiable, sober witnesses. Any way we turn on this one, we face a big mystery. In the interest of thoroughness, I will take the discussion one step further by exploring the possible mechanism by which it may be possible for a bigfoot to actually vanish.

I can think of two competing possibilities for how they might accomplish this. Either they really do vanish, or they just make it look that way. In addition to the lack of any known mechanism for disappearing, I'm guessing that it would take a lot of energy to dematerialize from one place and rematerialize somewhere else. Perhaps there is an easier way.

If it were possible to temporarily interfere with another person's perception of time or just their alertness, then one could exploit that opportunity to completely outmaneuver the temporarily immobilized person. Perhaps one can create the illusion of disappearing by interfering with the thought processes of those in your immediate vicinity. Momentary lapses in perception could be inflicted by hypnosis, sleep, interference in neural pathways, or some form of temporary mental paralysis. While this may be called a simpler feat than genuine disappearance, it is still a formidable trick, especially for something that is generally considered to be our own evolutionary inferior. How in the name of science could a member of the Pongidae (ape) family manage to exercise any kind of telepathic control of another being's mental process, even for a short period of time? These creatures are not supposed to be smarter than we are. Of course, that depends on how we define smart. We may be technologically advanced and cognitively complex creatures, but perhaps by being so, we have also diminished our mental capacities in other areas, such as infrasound, where these creatures are very much better equipped. And superior mental faculties would be necessities for an essentially nocturnal predator that cannot rely on visible light as heavily as can the diurnal predators like us.

In some form, I am quite certain that this is precisely the case. The possibility that bigfoots have some sort of sophisticated mental capabilities is strongly suggested by countless sighting reports that suggest a feeling of uneasiness and of being watched when one is in the proximity of a sasquatch. It ought to be abundantly clear to any researcher that these vibes emanate from the sasquatch and that bigfoots are quite capable of generating these "bad vibes" as a first line of defense against human intrusion. Field researchers that I know well and who have been in the proximity of a sasquatch agree on the fact that there is some type of sixth sense that the creatures manifest.

Paul Freeman carried a gun for many years because he ascribed to Krantz's view that we need to shoot one and prove they exist, thus sparing the rest from probable destruction at the hands of humanity. All of Freeman's sightings occurred only after he stopped carrying a gun. Paul is firmly of the opinion that they were aware of the shift in his intentions after he stopped carrying the gun. Paul also offers that one's first look at a living sasquatch "will be quite a surprise" in terms of the sense of power and foreboding that emanates from the creature at close range. Anyone who has seen a sasquatch knows that it is a breathtaking experience. Locking eyes with one of these creatures is absolutely petrifying.

How far does that power extend? What are the mental capabilities of the creatures that enable them to anticipate traps, assess human intentions, and stop intruders cold in their tracks? If they can do things with their mind that we cannot, then how can we really be smarter than they are?

It is important to remember that these are creatures of the night. And to remember that evolution has not stood still in the past two million year for bigfoots or for *Homo sapiens*. Whether bigfoots are of the Pongidae lineage, *Gigantopithecus blackii*, or of the Hominidae lineage, *Homo erectus*, or *Homo neandertalensis*, really doesn't matter. What does matter is that evolution has likely proceeded at the same accelerated rate for them over the past two million years that it has for us *Homo sapiens*. We sapiens have benefited from an evolution that has seen a greatly expanded cerebral cortex, a loss of body hair, an unmatched facility for fine motor skills, tool manipulation, and so forth. The same must be considered for bigfoots. The hand impression Paul Freeman cast shows a hand without much of a plenar pad: the bulge of muscle on the palm at the base of the thumb. A large

plenar pad, such as humans possess, is indicative of a highly mobile thumb. The lack of a large plenar pad implies that bigfoots lack our degree of thumb mobility, suggesting they are not big tool users. This may not be a huge disadvantage considering how much of their time is spent operating in total darkness. Tools like guns or flashlights are fine, but not nearly as useful to a nocturnal predator as some kind of sixth sense that enables one to detect other bio-fields in one's immediate surroundings. Wouldn't evolution also favor the acquisition of other skills that come in mighty handy in the nocturnal environment? Skills like the ability to throw intimidating mental energies at unwanted intruders, or to project paralyzing infrasound energies at potential prey? Such skills would make nocturnal hunting as straightforward as going to the grocery store is for us diurnal hominids. Skeptics will doubtlessly assert that there is no precedent for the evolution of such sophisticated mental capabilities, but the creature kingdom abounds with impressive mental acuities that are absent in humans. Echo-location, infrared sight, infrasound awareness, homing instincts, and more are found among "lesser" mammals, birds, reptiles, and even insects.

Adaptations and evolution are fine, but how can it be possible to evolve the capability to cross dimensions, or whatever is else behind the amazing feats that these things are allegedly doing when people say they flat-out disappeared? If the reported examples of disappearances are accurate, then we must treat the possibility that it is not an illusion, and that something like that is really happening. There might be some consolation to be found in a very important detail that seems to be present in all accounts of disappearing bigfoots. In all cases, the witnesses stated that, after the disappearance took place, there was still a palpable sense of foreboding, a sense of being watched, even a subsequent sighting of the same creature (as in Rocky's case) that suggests that the creature was still around. The pattern suggests that when they do disappear, they don't go far. They didn't leave the planet or even the county. They seem to have shifted locations very locally. That implies the expenditure of a lot less energy than would be required to make a big shift in location but it still doesn't tell us how something could instantly flop locations, even locally.

Let's digress into the world of physics for a few paragraphs. In his 1988 book, *A Brief History of Time*, Stephen Hawking discusses the search in physics for a single, consistent, unified theory that will include all the partial theories of contemporary physics. Specifically,

theoretical physicists are trying to unify the partial theory of gravity, general relativity, and quantum theory into one grand, unified theory that will predict the masses of different sub-atomic particles instead of having to choose those values to fit the observations. Einstein worked on this problem toward the end of his career but could not reconcile his disbelief in the reality of quantum mechanics, specifically the uncertainty principle that states that one can never know the precise velocity and direction of certain subatomic particles.

One of the main difficulties was that gravity could not be unified with general relativity since general relativity did not incorporate Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. The partial theories that govern weak, strong, and electromagnetic forces relied on the uncertainty principle in fundamental ways. Supergravity was suggested as a solution after the problems with combining general relativity and the uncertainty principle were demonstrated through complex calculations that were published in 1972. More recently, supergravity began to fall out of favor and "string theory" gained ascendancy since physicists were not having much success with showing that supergravity was finite or that it could explain the kinds of particles that we observe. Then a newer kind of string theory, called heterotic string theory was devised. It showed greater promise in explaining the kinds of particles we actually observe as the byproduct of collisions in particle accelerators or "atom smashers."

The biggest problem with string theories, and their most relevant aspect to this chapter on disappearing bigfoots, is that they only work if space-time contains either ten or twenty six dimensions instead of the four dimensions that make up our familiar world. These extra dimensions are not a problem for everyone. As Hawking points out, extra space-time dimensions come in handy to the science fiction writer who wishes to get around certain limitations of general relativity, like going back in time and traveling faster than the speed of light. One takes a shortcut through the extra dimensions to get around the confines of general relativity which unequivocally states that we cannot attain light speed without expending an infinite amount of energy.

The physical world we inhabit is composed of three physical dimensions, plus the additional dimension we call time, making a total of four dimensions in "space-time." If there are more dimensions that we cannot see, where would they be? Stephen Hawking suggest that the other dimensions are curved up into a very small ball that is

so small we do not notice it: something like a million million million million millionth of an inch. We can only see the three space dimensions and the one time dimension that are fairly flat. To access these additional dimensions one would have to step through some sort of self-generated crack in the space-time continuum we inhabit. If one were to do that, they would essentially disappear from view. Or, could it be possible to warp local space-time? If the dimensions we occupy are fairly flat in local space-time, could they be locally warped so that two separate but nearby points of space-time are brought together just long enough for something to step through the temporary point of contact between the two points or strings. If that were to happen, what would be seen from our position in four-dimensional space-time? A being would disappear from point A and reappear at a separate but nearby point B in the same instant. Sound familiar?

Since it is asserted by the paranormal camp that bigfoots are interdimensional beings, we might look to string theory for some indication of where these other dimensions are and how bigfoots can gain access to them. If the other dimensions are curved into a phenomenally small space, it doesn't help us explain how they could be accessed.

It has been shown that the dimension called time is not constant everywhere. Time progresses slightly slower when it is measured further away from large gravitational masses. Time elapses more quickly when the person experiencing it is closer to a large mass. As a demonstration of this fact, Hawking describes an experiment in which two clocks were synchronized, and then one was put at the top of a water tower, further from the earth's center of mass by the height of the water tower. The other clock was stationed on the ground. Later the clocks were checked and it was consistently found that the clock on the water tower recorded time ever so slightly slower than the one on the ground, owing to the fact that it was further from the earth's center of mass. Atop the water tower, time was less influenced by the earth's gravitational warping of space-time.

This phenomenon is taken to an extreme by Einstein who postulated that a person traveling in space, away from all gravitational centers and moving at almost light-speed, would only age eighty years while time on earth would advanced two hundred years in the same interval. If the person who spent those eighty years traveling in space were to return to earth, they would essentially have traveled into the

future, for they would have entered a world that is 200 years ahead of the one they left eighty years ago. The point here is that time is not a constant quantity everywhere in the universe. There is local variation in time and maybe the other dimensions as well. We could therefore discuss the possibility that slowing down or speeding up local time could be used to create the illusion of vanishing.

String theory requires the existence of at least six more dimensions than the three physical dimensions and one temporal dimension that comprise the familiar four dimensions of "space-time." This gives us an interesting possibility to ponder, but absolutely no way of explaining how a primitive-looking creature could access things that we can barely imagine; things like time dilation or travel between dimensions. The very existence of bigfoot is troubling enough without incorporating such far-fetched suggestions. Apart from the advanced intellect and brainpower, it would seem to imply an energy problem that we cannot easily resolve. Moving from here to there in much less than the usual time would seem to require amounts of energy that could not be generated through the Krebs cycle, which is the biological means of energy production that is utilized by all complex living things on this planet.

Since science is currently challenged by the fairly simple suggestion that bigfoots exist, assigning superior mental powers to bigfoots will not be taken seriously. Even discussion of the possibility is going way out on a limb. But it does appear that there are enough eyewitness reports of such things that it could be called unscientific NOT to talk about it. It makes us uneasy and it further strains the credibility of a topic that does not have any credibility to spare. On the other hand, the incidental benefit of such a discussion is that it helps us understand why it is so difficult to sneak up on a bigfoot, and why it seems that they evidently exist but yet they are also seemingly impossible to catch.

Stephen Hawking concludes his aforementioned book by speculating as to the significance of a unifying theory of physics, should it ever be found. If the disparate theories and principles of modern physics are ever unified in one grand stroke of mathematics and logic, says Hawking, then we may for the first time also come to "know the mind of God." What a lofty and noble quest: To know the mind of God!

To personalize this matter, I was raised with a very Catholic con-

cept of God. We routinely invoked Him as the catch-all explanation for every mystery of the natural and the metaphysical world that left us puzzled. Every mystery of my mid-western world, whether it was the whims of a tornado, the indiscriminate ravages of a disease, or the whereabouts of my dead relatives, was attributed to the hand of God. My view of God has changed since those Catholic prep-school days but I still don't know precisely what or who God is. All I'm sure of is that He isn't the forty foot tall, bearded male Caucasian that was portrayed in my catechism books, sitting in a throne above the clouds, and noting the falling of every sparrow.

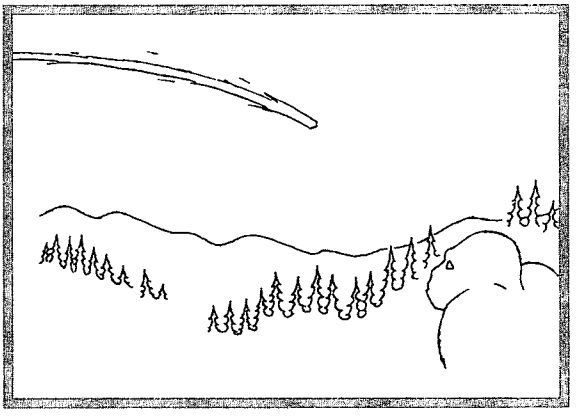
No, I can't say that I yet know what or who God really is, but like Stephen Hawking in his quest for unification, I feel that if I ever come to understand precisely how it could be that a sasquatch can be seen by multiple witnesses to vanish from plain sight, then, I will be very much closer to understanding maybe not the mind, but certainly the hand, of God.

Perhaps the cosmic mysteries of our existence, the "paranormal phenomena" if you will, are also ripe for unification. Science will have to become something different than it is today if it can even take on such a quest. It may take another hundred years, if it happens at all. If it does, I hope I am around to see whether or not the sasquatch phenomenon gets included in the all-encompassing understanding of death, afterlife, spirits, time, space, and dimensionality. I can't help but think that the sasquatch phenomenon is somehow more accessible than these other phenomena and that it may be the avenue that leads us to a better understanding of these other mysteries. Understanding the sasquatch phenomenon seems like the place to start because we know where they live, and we are learning how to find them there. Shane V. concluded his sighting report (Chapter Three) by suggesting, "You don't find a sasquatch. They find you."

Based on my field research, I know of specific places in Oregon where sasquatches live. When I visit these places, strange things happen but always I run out of time and have to leave before I get to meet a sasquatch. I guess I haven't yet learned how to let them find me. Perhaps they know where I am, but they're just not interested in presenting themselves, much less taking the time to explain their take on life's deepest mysteries. I guess unification will have to wait.

chapter ten

No Stone Left Unturned



If the question is, "What is behind the bigfoot phenomenon?", then there are three possibilities:

- Hominids have evolved on planet earth that inhabit the nocturnal forest environment and are averse to most human contact.
- It is all "manufactured," which is scientific shorthand for a combination of misidentification, hoaxing, and imagining.
- Extraterrestrials.

The first possibility is favored by most sober cryptozoologists. It is also the favored hypothesis for most of this book. The second possibility, that the bigfoot phenomenon is manufactured, sounds simpler than it really is, given the sheer volume of physical evidence and anecdotal sighting data, however inconclusive, that would have to be faked, imagined, or misidentified. And since the "manufactured" view has been explored more thoroughly than all the others in nearly fifty years of media treatment, let's put that hypothesis aside for now. Occam's Razor reminds us to favor the simplest possible explanation, and the absolutely simplest possible explanation is only one word long: extraterrestrials. It's not the favored hypothesis, just the shortest one. It is also the possibility that serious authors are generally unwilling to discuss.

If we are going to pursue the matter courageously, then we must

leave no stone unturned. That means tolerating at least some discussion of an extraterrestrial connection to the bigfoot phenomenon. It must also be said that every researcher of the bigfoot topic is bound to encounter this suggestion sooner or later, so it may as well be addressed directly. When I began investigating sighting reports for the BFRO, we used to say that there was never a credible bigfoot sighting report that also included UFOs. I frequently used that phrase when asked about the alien connection. I don't use that statement any more. Now, I just keep quiet. There ARE credible claims of UFO sightings in connection with bigfoot activity. They are beyond rare, but they do occur. I don't have a clue what to make of them, but I have also found at least a few reports that combine elements of both phenomena. To the skeptic, this supports the view that the witnesses reporting such incidents are genuinely delusional, but I would disagree. In a few cases, the reports come from established bigfoot researchers who qualify as very reliable observers. Further, the bigfoot observations being described by witnesses are completely consistent with the kind of bigfoot activity that is reported at many other locations by many other witnesses. Only the descriptions of the bright, airborne orbs (which are usually yellow-orange or blue-white) are something apart from the usual bigfoot sighting reports.

This book is essentially dedicated to the view that bigfoot-style creatures have evolved here on earth, just as we have. But there are some complicating issues in this view. For one, on the basis of track finds and sighting reports, it appears that there is so much variation in appearance of the creatures that it begins to look like there is more than one kind of bigfoot-style creatures inhabiting our continent.

Russian researchers such as Dimitri Bayanov have long argued that there are different kinds of bigfoots. Bayanov and others are confident that the Yetis of south central Asia are apart from the Almas, or Almasty, of northern Asia. They suppose that the Almas of the Caucasus Mountains are a vestigial population of Neanderthals. They are more human-like and better tool users than the yeti or most kinds of North American bigfoots.

Here in North America, three-toed tracks have been found in Pennsylvania, Oregon, Mississippi, and Florida. They are much rarer than the more familiar, five-toed tracks, but long runs of such tracks suggest that they are not the result of simple hoaxes. Also, varied colors and sizes of bigfoots are reported which behave in athletic, intel-

ligent, and elusive manners. The stealth capabilities of these beings suggest a degree of sophistication that rivals our own. In other ways, they flat-out exceed anything humans are capable of doing.

None of this requires an extraterrestrial origin, but it is not scientifically out of bounds to consider some of the extraterrestrial possibilities. I cannot say this is an altogether acceptable avenue to pursue. Indeed, the possibilities become galactic. When I began investigating bigfoot sightings, I did not plan to try and reconcile our place in the galaxy as a prerequisite to understanding the bigfoot phenomenon. I still don't want to go there, but there are some worthwhile considerations that fall out of such a discussion.

The biggest appeal for the extraterrestrial connection to those who espouse it, is the fact that it does a tidy job of answering all, and I mean ALL of the questions about why they are so clever, curious, capable, and so forth. It also forces us to weigh the possibility that humanity is another candidate species with an extraterrestrial origin. Of course, any such discussion has one big problem from a scientific perspective and that is the fact that it seems to be absolutely unverifiable. So let's skip all that for now and consider what we do know.

The nearest star to our own sun is Alpha Centauri, which is 4.6 light years away. Right next door, astronomically speaking. But Alpha Centauri is not thought to have any planets in its system, at present. Yet, more than one hundred planets have been discovered elsewhere in our galaxy as of 2002. Not bad, considering ten years ago, no extra-solar planets had been discovered. The closest star to us that is known to host a planet system is Vega, which is twenty-five light years away. Another star, Zeta Reticuli, some fifty-four light years distant, is favored by UFO buffs as the parent star of a planet whose inhabitants regularly visit Earth. This information is obtained from those who study the alien abductee phenomenon. By the way, no planets have been detected yet in the Zeta Reticuli system.

A team headed by Dimitar Sasselov of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics recently found the farthest away planet yet, some 8,000 light-years away. This is over thirty times farther away than any other planet ever found, and it is the first planet ever found outside the corner of the galaxy that we inhabit, which is the Orion spiral arm of the Milky Way Galaxy.

Planets are generally too small and too faint to be seen even with the best telescopes on earth or in space. Planets are usually detected

by the gravitational wobbles that they induce on the parent star that they orbit. This detection method is known, appropriately enough, as the gravitational-wobble method. Big, Jupiter-sized planets are going to have the kind of strong gravity that will cause their parent stars to noticeably shudder in response to the counter-pull of their own gravitational field. The newly found planet, OGLE-TR-56B, was the first to be discovered by a new method. Called the transit or TR method, it measures the slight dimming, or occultation, of the parent star that occurs when the planet passes directly in front of the star it orbits, as seen from earth. It took 56 tries to find a planet by this means because many of the other objects that were found turned out to be faint stellar masses, like binary stars, instead of planets. Once a likely candidate was found, it was confirmed on the world's largest telescope, the Keck telescope in Hawaii, using the gravitational-wobble method.

The transit technique promises to usher in a new era of planet discoveries using small, ground based telescopes. Still, the new method has limitations. Not every planet crosses the face of its parent star as seen from our point of view. If a planet's presence is detected by its transit though, it has to be confirmed using the wobble method.

The point here is that the cataloging of extra-solar planets is in its infancy, and we are probably poised on the brink of a huge breakthrough. It is not a stretch to suppose that, in the near future, it will emerge that most stars host planet systems that are presently too faint to detect. So far, all planets that have been discovered are at least as big as Jupiter, and sometimes much larger. The newest planet is 2.6 times the size of Jupiter. The transit method is intriguing because it seems to offer the potential for finding earth-sized planets that are invisible to the wobble method. This is good news because the same large size and strong gravity that makes Jupiter-sized planets noticeable with the gravitational wobble method renders them utterly inhospitable for life as we know it. After all, how can we imagine intelligent life forms existing in a gravity field that would crush rocks on the planet's surface? Not that planets the size of Jupiter are even thought to possess solid surfaces. More likely, the "gas giant" planets the size of Jupiter consist of progressively thicker layers of toxic ammonia and methane gasses that gradually morph from thick gases into a seething liquid surface of still denser substances.

Intelligent life is more likely to develop on the smaller, terrestrial planets the size of Earth or Mars. Once the next orbiting space tel-

escope, the Kepler, is launched in 2006, then we may have the seeing-power necessary to resolve Earth or Mars-sized planets that orbit other stars in the Orion spiral arm. Even then it is expected to take another five years of observing before such small planets can be identified.

The planets that have been detected in Vega's system (twenty-five light years away) are Jupiter-sized planets. Planets that large do not seem to offer conditions that are right for folks like us, though this may not be the entire fact of the matter. Jupiter has recently been credited with making an important contribution to highly evolved life here on earth. It is now thought that Jupiter (and Saturn to a lesser extent) serves as the vacuum cleaner of the solar system. It gravitationally sweeps up the earth-crossing comets and asteroids that would otherwise pummel us much more frequently with objects that might annihilate most terrestrial life forms on our planet. Perhaps a Jupiter-sized planet in a superior (outer) position is an essential component toward ensuring hospitable conditions in the inner solar system. Vega may then be a good bet, especially if smaller planets that we still cannot see track closer orbits to that parent star. The inferior (inner) planets in Vega's system would enjoy the same benefit of a larger, superior planet, like Jupiter, which would shield them from occasional, deadly bombardments of cosmic debris.

How many Vega-like possibilities for life exist amidst the hundred billion suns that comprise our galaxy? Astronomer Frank Drake devised a mathematical answer to that question. It is now known as the Drake Equation. He factors in rate of star formation, percentage of stars with planets, an estimate of how many of those planets might support life, and how many of those planets would have technological civilizations that might be detectable from Earth. Drake comes up with 100,000,000,000,000 detectable civilizations among the fifty billion galaxies in the known universe. This means two thousand detectable civilizations per galaxy. Drake supposes that extremely advanced civilization become so efficient that they stop producing detectable signals so there would be more than two thousand civilizations in an average galaxy. Not only would the most advanced civilizations be undetectable, they also ought to be the most mobile civilizations. It seems like a mobile alien civilization would have its hands full just trying to map out the thousands of civilizations in its

own galaxy. Visiting planets in other galaxies seems hopeless, given the mind-boggling distances and presumed travel times.

If inter-galactic travel was possible, then we would expect visitors from our nearest neighboring galaxy: Andromeda, some two million light years away. It is a spiral galaxy like ours and despite its incomprehensible distance, is close enough to the Milky Way that the two galaxies are thought to be interacting, maybe even colliding. There are six other galaxies in our little corner of the universe, which carries the folksy name of The Local Group. But forget the neighboring galaxies, there are so many possibilities for planets and life in our own galaxy that it behooves us to draw the line of consideration somewhere much closer to home.

The Andromeda Galaxy is the only galaxy in the northern hemisphere that is visible to the naked eye. To see it, find the constellation Cassiopeia (a large "W"). Look at the point of the first "V" of the "W," then avert your gaze a little to the right. The smudge of light you notice is the Andromeda Galaxy.

Confining our calculation to the Milky Way Galaxy, it is now thought Drake's initial estimates, two thousand detectable civilizations, was too generous. For one, the entire inner galaxy is now thought to be an absolute riot of colliding stars and radiation flux, not to mention a large, all-consuming black hole at the galactic center. Since one black hole can ruin your whole day, the entire inner third of the galaxy may be uninhabitable. The outer provinces of the galaxy, including the Orion spiral arm, are seen as much mellower locations. Less can go wrong in these galactic suburbs, so terrestrial evolution can proceed with less interruption, under the benign warmth of a stable main sequence star like the Sun.

Drake considered many factors in his equation but he neglected to factor in the need for a planetary system that included a big outer planetary umbrella like Jupiter, because the protective value of Jupiter's position superior to our own was not well understood at the time of his groundbreaking calculation. He was also understandably unaware of the recent realization that the Moon has a stabilizing effect on the earth's day-night rotational axis. All of these newer factors further reduce the number of possibilities for planets with highly evolved, technological civilizations that could communicate with us or drop in for a visit.

Without a big moon, our planet would still have day and night, but

the axis of rotation would wobble like a top that is losing its gyroscopic stability as it slows to a stop. Life could exist on earth if we lacked a moon, but established population centers would not be possible unless they were underground. Climatic fluctuations on a moonless Earth would be extreme. A specific location on Earth would experience a decade or few of polar tundra enveloped in perpetual darkness, followed by searing heat under relentless and a never-setting sun. In between, there may be times of climatic quiescence and temperate conditions, but always another climatic catastrophe would loom in the near future, and when it arrived it would force everyone to relocate to another, more tolerable location a quarter of a globe away. Perhaps intelligent life could get going, but it would be immensely tougher to get organized and civilized if extreme climatic fluctuations forced everyone to periodically relocate to the other side of the equator.

Our moon is quite unique in the solar system. There are larger ones in our solar system, though not very many. And no other planet has a moon that is one-sixth of its own size. Earth's moon is the largest moon in the inner solar system, and the inner solar system of a Class G star is thought to be a galactic cradle for highly evolved life forms. Orbits in the inner solar system of a "main sequence" star are warmer and safer than in the outer reaches of the solar system. Being in the outer provinces of the galaxy is an advantage, too. It keeps us away from the bombardment of cosmic rays from exploding stars, not to mention the black hole at the galactic center.

How did we get such a large moon? It used to be believed that it was captured as it whizzed by. That thinking changed after the Apollo program. Moon rock samples brought back to earth showed that the moon once WAS the earth. The rocks are similar, if not identical. This fact validated the collision theory, which suggests that the moon is a big chunk of earth that was knocked off of the earth as a consequence of a collision with a passing object about the size of Mars.

So it appears Jupiter has not done its job as vacuum cleaner well enough to keep *all* of the riff-raff away. But suddenly that can be seen as a good thing. Had the earth not been creamed by a large object that crossed our path at the wrong time, we would not have acquired the stabilizing influence of an outsized moon. If we had not acquired a large moon, we would all look like sasquatches if we were to prevail as a species against the wild swings of rotational instability that our

planet would manifest. If civilized, technological humanity were to evolve on a planet that had no moon, we would have to somehow adapt to huge and frequent climatic shifts. We would have to be either really adaptable, really migratory, or both. We would need more endurance and speed to our locomotion and we would need an extremely efficient body covering that protected us under a much wider range of climatic conditions. A thick, head-to-toe mat of fine hair or fur would be mighty handy. We would need acute senses that extended beyond the range of visible light, for we would be forced to operate during sustained periods of perpetual darkness. Keener night sight and maybe a sixth sense would be favorable adaptations for existing in these periods of sustained darkness. Living under ground, and hibernating, would be advantageous.

Combine all the features discussed in the last paragraph and you basically have a sasquatch. Everything about the sasquatch seems like the prototype for a creature that was designed to endure huge climatic swings, perpetual darkness, and long migratory distances, such as would be necessitated by existence on an extremely wobbly planet that lacked a stabilizing moon.

If sasquatches are terrestrial in origin, they suggest a time when climatic conditions were more variable and extreme. This could be attributed to the ice ages of the past 100,000 to two million years or more. If they originate elsewhere, then earth must be a virtual paradise by comparison.

If the Drake equation is too generous in its estimated number of life-sustaining planets, then Earth is more unique and fortunate than his calculations suggest. We may indeed be a one-in-a-million planet, in terms of habitability. If so, then we would be a definite "must-see" for any intra-galactic traveler. It is amusing to wonder how our earth would be portrayed in travel brochures on a distant planet:

> "A paradise of varied but stable climates, a dramatic moon to admire, and abundant water to absorb and disperse excess heat. Lush forests and curious life forms, both aquatic and terrestrial. Travelers are advised to remain in the woods by day so as not to provoke the unpredictable human inhabitants of this rare Milky Way paradise."

The fact that there are not any sasquatch sightings in Hawaii is one

reason to suppose that we are not being visited by tall, hairy, sightseeing aliens. Would anyone go to all the trouble to cross the galaxy for a visit to earth and not include a stop in Hawaii, or some of the other Pacific island paradises? They would certainly be on my list of places to visit.

The notion that sasquatches bear any connection to UFOs is built largely on one item of circumstantial evidence: There are people who describe bigfoot activity in localities that also have a disproportionate number of UFO sightings. It seems that there are certain areas such as the southern Washington Cascades, northern California, parts of Nevada, New Mexico, and the North Carolina/Virginia border, where UFO *and* sasquatch sightings regularly occur.

Here's the way it goes: Eyewitnesses offer vivid accounts of unexplainable phenomena. Scientists don't give the matter any consideration because anecdotes, whether they're describing bigfoots or flying saucers or both, do not constitute empirical evidence. Please call if you ever find a body, though. Life goes on. End of story.

As a serious bigfoot researcher, I don't know whether to expend any energy to make a connection that will make the sasquatch matter still more unlikely to ever be taken seriously. I DO know that serious bigfoot researchers will occasionally encounter sincere witnesses and sighting reports that include nocturnal lights of some description. I would be the first to encourage such researchers not to jump to the conclusion that the lights are of an extraterrestrial origin. What are UFOs anyway? We assume they're indications of life elsewhere in the galaxy. They may not be. They may represent mysterious phenomena of a more local origin. At least some UFOs probably are. One could be witnessing bolides or ball lightning, both of which science has begrudgingly acknowledged as real only very recently.

Bigfoot investigators should still try to acquire very specific descriptions of the lights and shapes that are described by witnesses as UFOs in hopes that a pattern to the observation may someday emerge. So far, the most common descriptions I have encountered are brightly illuminated orbs of either a reddish-orange or blue-white color. What we are to make of them, I do not know, but here are a few typical accounts that I have investigated to the point where I am satisfied that they are factual:

Genelle writes:

"When I first moved in and tried to go for a walk in the woods taking the pasture road, some huge "animal" growled and snarled at me from the edge of the woods in the direction I was walking, so I immediately returned to the house. That happened several more times when I was in my back yard at the edge of the woods. We did have a small amount of bear traffic occasionally, but as a rule they were small brown bears and not capable of making such large growls. At any rate, I was warned!

Next came the daytime hooting of many owls that had a man's voice tinge. I decided they must be bootleggers or drug dealers signaling customers for sales. Sometimes they started at 3 a.m. and lasted throughout the day. Sometimes they were clearly in my back yard and when they got that close, I would sneak quietly out in the dark and shoot over their "heads," which would take care of the problem for about a month at a time.

From February 1996 through July 2002 I lived alone in a farmhouse on the edge of the woods in the center of approximately 170 acres in south-central Virginia near the border with North Carolina. There were woods on two sides and open pastureland on the other two sides with a hay barn at one end (in the woods) and more barns and equipment barns at the other side of the pasture in the woods. Where the woods started, the land dropped off into deep ravines with a large year-round creek that flowed into an old pond, both in densely wooded area. Part of the woods was a cedar forest but the majority was pine, oak, and maple. At some of the edges where pasture and woods met, the land had been pushed up into piles of earth. There was dense shrub growth atop these piles.

In April 1998, I put a new set of baby geese and chickens outside for their first night out of the house. At around 6 p.m., I was inside and I heard the loudest, longest roar of my lifetime, coming from the edge of the woods closest to my little birds. It seemed to last forever in a monotone from beginning

to end. It would have taken the capacity of three sets of cow lungs to provide so powerful a scream that lasted so long. I went flying out to my little birds, the dogs along with me, and I observed something very strange. All the birds, including the geese, and the dogs, stood motionless in dead silence in the direction of the scream, which was still going on! This was the most terrifying noise I've ever heard and I will never forget it. Later I found that this "animal" apparently traveled across the highway and screamed again down in a creek bottom near a farmhouse newly inherited by some people from Norfolk who where there for the weekend. A friend of mine was with them at the time. They were so frightened that they left for Norfolk after just arriving! My friend, a life long hunter and trapper, said he had never heard anything like it in his life and duplicated the scream for me. It was the same thing I heard.

I let the chickens out to run at 4 p.m. every day. One evening when I walked my tiny dogs up the road, across the front pasture and back to the house next to the woods, I noticed that a few chickens had found their way to the pasture and were too close to the woods for safety. I walked back that way to shoo them back to the yard. I was loudly calling for my little male dog to catch up, when exactly parallel to where I was standing, some large creature turned and went into the thicket behind the low hills at the edge of the woods. I saw only its back, about four feet long. It had apparently been sitting there watching the chickens. It had very coarse hair, grayish black in color, about 3.5 inches long. That was all I saw of it. It wasn't a bear or large dog, or anything else I could relate to having seen before.

Over the years, out of obstinacy or false bravery, I did manage to walk in the woods in the cedar forest part. The silence was deafening. I always felt I was being watched and occasionally would hear a large branch snap, but that was all.

After I got rid of the chickens, something would hit the house so hard at night that the canopy bed upstairs in the two-story

section would swing back and forth. I was terrified. I called the police, but they could never find anything. There were never any prints in the hard packed clay. Then one night something grabbed the trunk of a two-story-plus high rambling rose vine heavy with thorns, and shook it so hard that I thought it would come off the house. No human could have done this no matter what type of gloves they wore. At the same time I heard feet hitting the side of the house as though they were "swinging" on it.

Some people from northern Virginia came down to investigate and found teepee type structures down by the creek made from sapling trees. No sooner did their truck clear my driveway on their way home, than some huge thing had a temper tantrum at the edge of the woods where they had come out. (I was walking the dog up the road at the time.) It broke branches, stomped, and clearly was beating the sides of tree trunks with large branches. I ran back to the house instantly. That night, as I was working on my computer, something beat the side of the house next to where I was sitting so hard I thought it would come through the siding.

Other strange things that happened were:

1. A strange voice bellowing from the barn in the woods that sounded like someone trying to copy my calling of my little dog "Muffin," but couldn't exactly get it clear. It was a deep voice, but of large capacity. It copied the way I did it. I could understand enough to hear a very rough "Muffin."
2. A front yard full of birds chirping so loudly they woke me up at 2 a.m.! Then in a group, they traveled down through the pasture and into the woods chirping very loudly the whole way. No humans could copy this.
3. At 10:30 p.m. I heard a distress scream from the same type of voice, but clearly a young one, higher pitched, coming from a deep ravine. Sounded like it was either lost or hurt. This continued for about ten minutes.
4. A large group of birds chirping up at the farthest barn at the edge of the woods at 11 p.m. until I came outside. When I

came out, the group stopped abruptly, but three individuals chirped one-time "signals" from low to high pitch that seemed like it was purely for my benefit. Humans could not replicate these chirps or they would be making a fortune in show business!

I've noticed "cause and effect" in the behavior patterns. I truly believe they saw that I loved animals and cared for them well. Therefore, they had no real malice towards me. However, I feel too, that they liked to "play" with me, and again, gave me warnings when they felt I (or others of my type) was getting too close to their "neighborhood." If I was walking down the road away from them, I'd get a hoot owl, and when I turned to come back, I'd get a screech owl. I think I entertained them and they liked to try and frighten me for their own amusement. I hope you don't think I'm totally nuts, but I did deal with this on almost a daily basis for six years and had plenty of observation time.

There have been a lot of UFO sightings in the area, by me at that location and at my own farm prior, by a number of friends, and by local policemen. One of the most important sightings by me and some neighbors also flew over the Braves baseball stadium filled with people who questioned it. The explanation was a "meteor." (With primary colored lights through the center!)

I have recently moved to Sarasota, FL and have had the first night's complete sleep in six years!"

With the exception of the last two paragraphs, this is a fairly classic description of a "habituation" situation. The witness is a female who is intrepid enough to live in a fairly remote location. She has an affinity for animals, much like Allen and April in Washington State. She is not easily intimidated by the kinds of spooky occurrences that would send most people, male or female, packing for a more populated neighborhood.

While it is very rare to find a person who is willing to tolerate such strange occurrence, there are such people and it may come as no par-

ticular surprise to learn that they are unusual people. This often undermines their credibility in the eyes of some researchers, but bigfoot researchers are often too quick to formulate opinions about them and this is unjustified for two reasons:

1. Lots of people think it would be fun to live alone in a cabin in an isolated place but, like Thoreau, they don't last very long. The isolation gets to you after a while. Most of us are too social for such isolation, and I'm no exception. It takes an unusual kind of person to stay in a remote place for very long. I've known a couple such individuals over the years and they are quirky, independent, headstrong, and fearless people.

2. It takes an even more unusual person to be unfazed by the sights and sounds that are associated with sasquatch presence. To be at ease with bigfoot activity takes a cool customer indeed, but also one who may not have a lot in common with "ordinary" folks. One of the isolated rural people I know is now married and therefore living a much less isolated existence, but he had sasquatch visitations at night and he was not at all happy about it. He, like most folks, seemed to prefer that they stayed away.

I am impressed with how articulate some of these witnesses are, and Genelle is a good example. She does not seem to scare easily and when she relates some very unusual and scary events she does so with precision and objectivity.

I asked her to elaborate on the second-last paragraph in which she referred to UFO sightings. This is how she replied:

> Thom,
>
> I've been a UFO observer since the age of 5 when I saw my first three with my parents and their friends. With regard to VA, you'll note that Pittsylvania County has the largest uranium deposits, at almost topsoil level, of any location in the world. Dupont purchased the mineral rights there many years ago, which made a lot of the local farmers, churches, etc., quite wealthy. I always wondered if the uranium had anything to do with the UFO activity in the area.

I saw three types. The largest was disk shaped with a row of square lights around the center band in different primary colors. I've never heard of one with that kind of light configuration. This particular one stayed in the area near my farm for almost a week on the south side near Chatham, moving close to the farm, hanging in the air, then moving slowly toward Chatham, dropping down below the tree tops, rising up again and returning to the farm. This is the one that went over Danville and was said to be a "meteor."

Prior to that, when coming home from work after midnight through a long dirt road owned by a lumber company, (on the northwest side of the farm) I saw the same primary colored lights in the woods across from my farm. The lights would go out as I approached. One night on the same northwest side just above the treetops, a huge white light came on and lit up the house and everything around it. My son was home on leave from the Navy that night and we both ran to the end of the living room and watched. The house was built with French doors all around (the better to watch livestock) and had no real "windows." The light coming into the French doors lit us up as well. It lasted for about 30 seconds and went off.

At the farm of the bigfoot happenings, there were two UFOs that would stay in the northeastern sky close to the house. I saw them on four occasions in the early morning and evening hours. These were oval, disk shaped, smooth and white with no obvious lights. Sometimes one would move slowly in the direction of Danville leaving the other in place over the farm. Then without warning the one left behind would instantly disappear. There were other witnesses to this who lived about 20 miles south of me.

A neighbor told of going to work one morning at his usual 4 a.m. to open up the plant in Chatham. When he arrived, a local policeman who was checking the doors of the businesses in town was standing at the edge of the parking lot overlooking rural pasture land, watching a UFO zipping through

the sky. It would stay level, then shoot to another altitude and sit; then do it again. James said they watched it for at least 30 minutes before it disappeared.

Another local policeman recently told of an encounter while driving at night on the back dirt roads with a witness who was taking him to a still. He said that all of a sudden a huge, very brightly lit object flew across the road behind his patrol car. He kept on going and ahead, on the right side of the road was this same object. There being nowhere to turn around, they fearfully kept driving forward. The object flew in the pasture beside them at the same speed, staying just barely above the ground. They came upon the entrance to a dairy and backed in to turn around. The object sat in the field across from them. Terrified but curious, they decided to sit there and watch it. He turned his lights off. As soon as he turned them off, the object started to come towards the car. He said he was so frightened that the only thing he could think of to do was turn on his spotlight. When he did that, it stopped. Then it took off and disappeared. Said he's never been on a country back road at night since. Considering that southerners aren't expansive thinkers, he never told anyone but his wife and me.

When I first moved into that house on the 170 acres in 1996, I saw the same kind of bright white object flying up the front pasture in the direction of the house. Half way up the pasture, it took off and disappeared. That only lasted for a few seconds.

Other interesting phenomena I saw often in the eastern and the northern skies at night were horizontal flashes of bright light. Did you ever see that film of the footage taken from one of our spacecraft shot back towards earth with the flashing lights and what appeared to be UFOs flying rapidly away from them? These flashes were the same kind. They appeared to be at a high altitude with the flash flowing horizontally out from a blast in the center. These flashes were not related to

lightning and were in clear skies. One night I saw one flash in front of a jetliner that was heading north.

I truly feel that there is something unusual about the southern central part of Virginia. When visiting my grandparents there as a child, I remember many stories from my great aunts and uncles about big fire balls going through the woods and up the railroad tracks. There were many more strange things going on there that I haven't even mentioned. Maybe after I get a year of sleep here in a populated area, I'll be able to tackle it again! Ha! The one thing I know for sure is that there is a lot more going on than we ever realized. I would love to be part of that research. I just don't want to be out there alone!

-Genelle Brown

Two BFRO field investigators were following up on a bigfoot sighting report in March of 2000. Rob Johnson and Phil Bange had just arrived at Little Cavenah Lake off Forest Road 62 near Start Up, Washington. It was 8:45 p.m. They were sitting in their car, watching and listening for signs of bigfoot activity when Rob saw activity of an entirely different kind:

"We were parked at a lake at the end of a logging road investigating a bigfoot incident that had occurred in the area. We sat with the lights out just listening and watching. Suddenly at approx 2100 I saw a glowing object that was green/blue in color, as it hovered over a ridge. I also saw a spotlight type beam come from the center of the sphere that was seemingly searching the area. Later, the object sank behind the trees, and I could see the object shining through the trees. The object at certain times would wink out and reappear at another location. The object would also multiply and reduce back into one object. After watching this light show for about 20-30 minutes we decided to vacate the area out of concern for our safety."

The next day, Rob e-mailed another BFRO investigator, Jeff Lemley, and recounted his startling experience. At the time, Jeff and

I were the only senior investigators (BFRO calls them curators) in the Pacific Northwest region.

"What should we do with it?" Jeff asked me.

"They didn't see a bigfoot so we can't really post anything on our website. Since it was a UFO, I suppose they should report it to a UFO website. Do you know of one?"

"Sure do," replied Jeff. "I dabbled in UFO investigations before I got interested in bigfoot. I know where to send him: The National UFO Reporting Center."

We agreed not to mention the matter to our BFRO colleagues. We knew the company line: UFOs don't have anything to do with bigfoots. We didn't want to rock the boat. It was a circumstantial connection in the first place but I was inwardly a bit amused at the concept: They went to see a bigfoot but they saw a UFO instead. Not a successful mission, but not a bad night's work, anyway!

Jeff referred Rob to the NUFORC. I called Rob just to hear the whole matter for myself. When I reached him by phone he still had not completely recovered from the experience. Rob told me that the entire experience was quite frightening. I asked him if he would consider returning to the site to make more observations. Absolutely not. In fact, the whole experience had a chilling effect on his interest in the bigfoot phenomenon.

That was the first time I ever seriously pondered a possible connection between the two phenomena but I shrugged it off as an amusing coincidence. I've now encountered a few more such "coincidences" and I still don't know what to make of them but it seems that any serious bigfoot investigator ought to be prepared to deal with claims of UFO sighting if they stay at it long enough.

Another dedicated field man was visiting me recently and I asked him how many times he had investigated a bigfoot matter that included some sort of UFO connection. Rick Noll has not been with the BFRO as long as I have but he has been investigating sightings longer than almost anyone in the Pacific Northwest these days. He goes back to the days of Peter Byrne and Rene Dahinden. He has investigated sighting reports that likely number in the hundreds so he seemed like a good person to ask about this alleged connection that I was pondering. Rick offered that he could recall only two situations that involved a report of UFOs as well. One was the Rob Johnson/Phil Bange experience at Little Cavenah Lake that was just mentioned.

The only other event in Rick's experience happened to himself and his brother when they were camped out near Mount St. Helens about a dozen years back. Rick was asleep in their tent when his brother excitedly awakened him. He told Rick that he heard some really strange and loud howls and screams in the night. Rick was fast asleep and had not heard a thing. He lay awake for a while, hoping they would sound off again. Nothing happened and soon Rick was again asleep. Next thing he knew, his brother awakened him a second time. Did he hear that? His brother described humming, machine-like noise that seemed to be coming from somewhere underground! Rick sat up and listened some more, but again he heard nothing. He strained to stay awake but he drifted off to sleep yet again, only to be awakened by his brother a third time. This time his brother excitedly reported that a cluster of lights just rose from the ground in the distance and disappeared into the sky. Again, Rick saw nothing. Was Rick's brother concocting or imagining this entire episode? Rick doesn't think so, but he certainly does not know what to make of the whole matter.

It reminds me of the situation that happened to me on the Skookum Meadow expedition that was discussed in Chapter Four. Recall that Jim Henick and I were stationed on the edge of the meadow and serving as forward observers. I fell asleep just before Jim heard the first knocking in the distance. Later, I fell asleep again just before Jim heard the loud scream that matched the scream we were broadcasting on the loudspeaker.

Todd Neiss's interest in bigfoot grew out of a sighting he had in the Coast Range of Oregon while he was in the army reserves. Todd's sighting was also witnessed by Sgt. Jeff Martin, another soldier in his outfit. In an attempt to gather some good evidence, these two witnesses established a listening post in the same area as their eyeball sighting of a few weeks prior. They ringed their location with sensitive "troop detectors" that sound an alarm if they are triggered by vibration caused by feet on the ground. Todd and Jeff commenced their vigil in a camper, cameras at the ready, and at the center of their ring of troop detectors.

Todd promptly fell asleep. Once asleep, Todd is an especially sound sleeper who is very hard to awaken. Then it happened. The electricity in the trailer suddenly went out. At the same instant, every one of the troop detectors simultaneously sounded their respective

alarms. Jeff Martin jumped out of his skin but Todd remained fast asleep. Jeff began shaking Todd violently. Todd remained asleep. The trailer was dark, the alarms were shrieking in unison, and Todd snored. Suddenly, the power came back on, the alarms all stopped sounding, and an instant later, Todd awoke. He was blissfully unaware that anything happened and there was no telltale indication that anything had taken place. To this day, Todd doubts that anything happened at all, much like Rick's opinion of the events that his brother claims to have experienced while he was asleep.

What just happened? I wish I knew. Is there something more than just an extraordinary coincidence behind the fact that certain people tend to fall fast asleep just before a night's sasquatch vigil comes to a climax? Coincidence would be the primary suspect. Anything more sinister becomes such a stretch that it cannot be seriously considered by anyone who wants to maintain any degree of scientific skepticism and objectivity.

Henry Franzoni is my mentor when it comes to bigfoot researchers. He wrote what amounts to a long paper or a short book on the subject in 1996. In his tome, he included a collection of UFO-related accounts which offer some interesting comparisons and with his permission, they are reprinted here:

> This is 44-year-old Estelle De Voto's story, told to Peter Guttilla, and recounted first in a 1976 *Saga* article, and later in *The Track Record*: "It was October 1974, and my husband called my attention to an article in *The Saugus-Newhall Signal*. Under the headline, "Does Bigfoot roam the Santa Clarita Valley?", the story told of two teenage boys named McBride who reported to police that they had seen a strange creature running and carrying a pig under its arm. I'm a member of a local club interested in reports of that kind, so I contacted the owners of the ranch where the sighting took place and went to investigate. I learned that only one of the McBride boys actually saw the creature on the grounds, while his brother glimpsed the monster as it ran off with the pig. What really interested me was that both boys said the creature had a "glowing blue belt" around its waist. I sent a statement to be published in *The Signal.*

One night in late November, about 11 p.m., I received a telephone call from a group of teenagers who had been driving late at night near Texas Canyon. The only way into the canyon is a passable dirt road used mainly by weekend campers... (The three boys) decided to drive through Texas Canyon to Sierra Highway (in the Santa Clarita Valley), and head back to town. They had entered the canyon at the northwest end and had traveled about three miles when they noticed a cloud of dust on the road ahead of them. Thinking it was a motorcycle or car kicking up the dust, they drove on. As they approached the spot they were shocked by a "herd of the weirdest looking animals we'd ever seen..." They described the three animals as tall, hairy creatures with dog-like faces, the bodies of a human and eyes that glowed. As they passed them, the creatures threw dirt and stones at the car and screamed in what the kids thought was "monkey chatter." Several of the witnesses said they saw more "points of light" coming down off a hill, giving them the impression that more of the creatures were approaching.

A fellow named Ed C., whose wife Estelle had met at PTA meetings, asked for a minute of her time at a local shopping center. He was accompanied by another man. "I'm paraphrasing now but this is basically what Ed told me:

In 1967 he had been attached to a military intelligence unit stationed in southern California. He said his unit had been investigating UFOs for a long time and asked me if I believed in UFOs. I said I had an open mind on the subject but my club was very interested. Ed emphasized that if I told anyone what he was about to say he would deny having said it. I felt myself getting a little angry, but I said I'd keep mum about it.

Anyway, Ed went on to say that back in 1967 he had been called to a remote desert location where a UFO had crashed. Several big trucks went to the scene including some equipped with what he called special devices. It was about then, I remember, that I noticed the two men in the

Plymouth, they were practically breaking their necks watching us...Ed told me that when his special unit arrived at the crash site, a pungent odor permeated the air. The object itself, which he said was oblong in shape, was broken in two but had apparently landed before exploding. Lying around in several places were the bodies of the occupants. He described them as four of the most "hideous looking creatures you can imagine." he said they were huge, about nine feet tall, covered with fine hair, and were a perfect likeness of what has been described as Bigfoot. The occupant's faces were Mongoloid in appearance, with pig-like noses. The mouths, which he said seemed to be grinning in death agony, showed a row of teeth with what looked like stubby fangs.

Ed emphasized that each creature wore a copper colored belt with a huge buckle on which there were small buttons. He said the belt glowed when activated but didn't say what it was used for. On their feet were boots something like sandals but with very thick soles. Apart from these things, the creatures had nothing else on them.

Ed said the glowing blue belt the McBride boys described worried him...he said, 'Estelle, these beings have no compunction about killing people. They've been turning up in recent years in growing numbers. Stay away from them... have I made myself clear? You're in over your head. There are other animals too, which are vicious... we don't know where they come from... but I don't want you to get in trouble over this. I wouldn't tell you what I know if I didn't think you were in danger...I've been in this business a long time and I know what I'm talking about.

In April of 1975...On several successive nights the family was terrified by "horribly loud" pounding sounds on the roof and sides of the house. The clincher came in June of that year when more than a dozen school children watched a tall, "hairy, white-faced ape" stare fixedly at them from an adjacent hillside. The De Voto children were among them and

later said that they had the feeling it was looking for them! Estelle De Voto needed little prodding to end her investigation of the blue-belted Bigfoot of Texas Canyon—she decided not to take the chance.

Also in April, 1975, two officers from the foothill division of the Los Angeles Police Department observed a large "glowing orange ball float out of the sky and land near Vasquez Rocks State Park." Two weeks later, a sheep rancher named Harlan Campbell discovered several sets of large tracks that can only be described as those of a giant ostrich, on the western slope of the San Gabriel Mountains and near Vasquez rocks State Park. Others found a set of enormous, man-like, barefoot tracks at a place called Mystery Mesa a few miles south of the Vasquez Rocks Wilderness Area and within view of Texas Canyon.

In August of 1972, a group of teenagers said they watched a red, glowing UFO "lift off" from somewhere in the vicinity of Norton AFB, and fly silently in the direction of the Santa Ana River Wash where it "bobbed up and down in the same place for a long time."

In 1970, a group of San Bernadino residents reported that a red-orange UFO "shot straight up into the air" near the east side of Norton AFB and hovered for more than 30 minutes over the Santa Ana River Wash before it suddenly "blinked out."

In November of 1975, east of and near Corona in Riverside County CA, "a gigantic object so bright you could hardly look at it" emerged from a man made lake close to a housing project near Border Avenue. A foul smell permeated the air.[1]

Two firsthand experiences of the author's (Henry Franzoni and his wife) follow:

We headed back to Skookum Lake (in the Fish Creek

drainage of the Mt. Hood National Forest), at around the same time of night (1:00 a.m.) as our visit one month prior.

A strange smell I had smelled the last time had provoked my curiosity about this place. The experience had occurred at around 1 a.m. What had happened was this: We were driving along, at about fifteen m.p.h., about three miles from the lake, and I had made a wrong turn and was doubling back, when an indescribable smell (kind of like burning bakelite combined with skunk) suddenly overcame us, accompanied by a gripping fear. We stopped the vehicle we were driving. After smelling the smell for about ten seconds, my girlfriend (the other of the "we") promptly went to sleep in the back seat for thirty minutes. After about ten minutes the smell disappeared, twenty minutes later she awoke. I was very scared the whole time. I could feel a presence looking at me, but I couldn't see or hear anything. In that moment, I thought Bigfoot was real.

We were curious. We went back to see what we could see, 1 month later. Visibility was excellent on the night of our second visit to the area, and we were parked on Camelback, facing north...For an hour the only light we saw was the moon in the sky. Then we saw what we thought was a campfire igniting, about a half-mile across a narrow valley from us, on the opposite tree-covered side, slightly below us on the east face of Round Mountain. We already had binoculars out, because we were looking at the planets, (and were ready to see a bigfoot, too) and looking around at the mountainous terrain in the moonlight with them. As we looked at the amber-colored "campfire" across from us with binoculars, it rose up over the trees, and we could see that it was shaped like an ice-cream cone lying on its side. The ice-cream cone started blinking extremely rapidly, blue and red light that could be seen along with the amber and white light. On the left-hand side, an amber hemisphere or half-sphere began to glow brighter and brighter and looked like some sort of Star-Trek light-drive device. After ten seconds or so there was a burst of light, and in less than one second,

the object traveled in an arc to a point we could still see on the horizon, leaving an amber light trail shaped like a rainbow, in the sky...that faded after another second. The object appeared to have a curved flight path to us, a parabolic or hemispheric arc across the sky.

We could still see the distant blinking object on the horizon from our 5,000 ft high vantage point on the logging road. We guessed it was 100 miles away or so. We couldn't really tell. My girlfriend pointed out to me that when we first saw it, it was next to us, below us on the opposite valley wall, on the ground. (next to means about a half mile across and down from us). When we last saw it, it was on the horizon, far, far away, and at the most fifteen seconds of time had passed from the beginning to the end of our experience.

Our repressive mechanisms had trouble with this experience. I joked that maybe they were talking to the bigfoots. We slept for a few hours in the van, then got up around 7:00 am to proceed to the spot we saw it take off from.

We tried to get there. When we got there around 8 a.m. the next morning, (9/2/93) there was a federal-looking four door sedan, (dark green Ford Explorer, I think), with four federal-governmentish looking people, one woman, three men, all in suits, all with sunglasses, and with spit shined black shoes, olive complexions. It looked just like a scene from the "X-files," just like a movie set. We slowly drove past them on the logging road. The people were parked on the side of the road and were standing outside their vehicle, positioned between us and the place where the "craft" appeared to take-off from the night before. They were checking us out and I was a little frightened. They were there for a reason, they just stared blankly at us while we drove passed, I waved at them and they didn't wave back.

This is an anonymous response I got after posting the above on the Internet one day:

Just read your account of an unexplained light on our opener of rifle deer season. There were many people in the woods on Oct 1st and many more still arriving. I my self was "high in the Cascades on Oct first, camped at about 4000 feet. I was down below Oakridge in the Umpqua drainage. If you saw what you thought you saw then I suggest you visit two of the three lookout towers that observe the area where you witnessed the craft. The USFS will give you the names of the people paid to man these towers. Most are very nice people and will tell you what they saw. I would talk to them. You will see that this is not an isolated experience for this area you spoke of.

On September 3rd 1994, while camping on the Crooked River Ranch, a friend and I observed a craft for many hours. This craft stayed in place over the Cascades (approximately between Detroit and US63) till the next evening.

On September 4th at approx. 9:48 PM it began to move. It slowly drifted north and west till it was gone. For two evenings we were periodically treated to a color show. At times the craft was just a light and would be still for a few hours. Then it would go into a color show for only about 15 minutes and then return to just a light. This was really neat on the 3rd as we watched it for 7 hours. I was quite taken when the craft began to move. It did not do a color show while moving but did begin to blink just prior to and while moving slowly. Feel free to write back and flame me if you feel the need.[2]

This is a letter from Peter Gutilla to Ray Crowe dated Sept. 6th, 1992:

I chased orange balls all over the place back in the 70's and came away convinced that when you have round, orange-red UFOs, you've probably got a BF in the vicinity. Had a fairly close encounter with an orange ball near Patterson's sandbar which account is described in Jan and Colin Bord's "Bigfoot Casebook", 1982.... mountain of orange ball reports (includ-

ing many photos) collected by the late Bill Vogel and followed up post mortem by Greg Long of Tigard, Oregon (haven't heard from him since the late '80s). Vogel, who died in 1985, was for 30 years Chief Fire Control Officer at Yakima Indian Reservation, Yakima, WA. He did an impressive job of recording orange ball sightings, and secondarily noticed an increase in BF reports during peak activity. He also logged reports of structured UFOs, underground "machine" sounds and the appearance of strange animals, including huge ostrich-like birds that left behind three-toed (not two as expected) tracks. It has been suggested that orange balls are ionized plasmas generated by subterranean fault pressures ("tectonic strain build-up") as in earthquake zones, etc., but I'm not convinced of this. I once watched an orange ball for more than two hours (in an area known for short-lived ones) as it hovered and descended and maneuvered hither and thither before zipping out of sight, and I doubt a naturally derived plasma would've lasted that long or behaved that way (it also blinked back at our powerful spotlight several times)."[3]

This Internet letter is from Don Hunt, dated Sat, 10 June 1995

On the evening of May 19 approx. 8:30 my family and I saw two very large very bright orange, or amber, lights, hover for approx. 10 minutes in the vicinity of the Chocolate Mountains 30 some miles south west of Blythe, California. They seemed to come from behind the mountain and then hover. They were motionless for a ten minute period and then both turned off at the same time. Don.[4]

In addition to all of these bizarre anecdotes that he collected, Henry Franzoni documented the curious claims of the infamous Ray Wallace. After his death in December, 2002, Wallace was alleged to have hoaxed track runs, but before his death, Ray was well known in local bigfoot circles such as Ray Crowe's Western Bigfoot Society, based in Portland. Ray Wallace submitted several short pieces to Ray Crowe's bigfoot newsletter, The *Track Record,* in which he made some fantastic claims. Among them was the claim that he was inter-

viewed at length by agents of the U.S. government who were investigating the suspicion that bigfoots were arriving on Earth via UFOs. As the owner of a construction company that worked road building contracts in national forests, Ray Wallace also claimed to know that forest workers in private industry were told not to report bigfoot sightings to the media if they valued their jobs. Wallace professed to have seen UFOs hovering over reservoirs in Washington where they were seen by him and others to be extending snorkel-like apparatuses into the water, presumably to tank up on earth's plentiful fresh water. Wallace was always viewed as an eccentric and untrustworthy. The few hoaxed track runs that he perpetrated were well known by other researchers at the time.

Ray Wallace achieved his greatest notoriety immediately after his death, when his lame hoaxes were exaggerated by *The Seattle Times* story to such an extent that the very existence of "Bigfoot" was called into doubt. Local researchers were well aware of just how irrelevant Ray Wallace was to the acquisition of bigfoot evidence during his lifetime. Yet, the article constructed the familiar "paper tiger" illusion that all bigfoot evidence was somehow attributable to a single individual: Ray Wallace. Then, they destroyed their paper tiger by quoting Wallace's relatives who alleged that Ray privately admitted his hoaxing mischief before he died.

Ray Crowe is a walking encyclopedia of bigfoot matters and one of the biggest reasons why Portland is a Mecca of bigfoot research and information. Even Grover Krantz recognized Ray as one of the most knowledgeable of the modern researchers. No collection of paranormal bigfoot anecdotes would be complete without his input so I sought his take on some of the strangest of bigfoots speculations that are discussed in this book. Ray offers:

> I agree, that there must be many inhabited planets, and that UFOs probably do come to earth...and even some of the occupants might be Wookies (bigfoot-style creatures, so named for the Star Wars character of that description)...if that's a connection...and you think in terms of evolution occurring on other planets as being "almost like here" ending in BI-symmetrical creatures that look almost like us. I find it highly unlikely. But still it might...might be right. Just don't think your book should be a place to but more than just men-

tion it until a lot more evidence is pieced together...let some of the other "far out" types explore this agenda...Lapseritis maybe. More so though, I believe that North America is fairly well covered with Bigfeet...and is fairly well covered with UFO (real or imagined or nature tricks), and I think also that North America is fairly well covered with cars, woodpeckers (no particular connection there), and bears...ever note that wherever there are bears, there are Bigfeet?...no, not anything of note, just they happen to inhabit the same place by coincidence. Don't believe there is a direct Bigfoot UFO connection (gave a talk once that there was at Mt Hood Community College though). As a reward, got lots of follow-up reports of BF activity.

That there might well be hairy aliens...sure, why not? Have a few that I've commented on in the Track Record. My favorite is when a couple of Wookies jump out of a UFO and take some soil samples, then take off again, this was near Atascadero, CA. Another one tells of a sighting in a Portland area that had a landed UFO with a BF seen in an open door on the ramp...another where they could be seen thru portholes piloting...and my favorite...a Star Wars type meeting that the abductee was near and had seen Wookie like creatures sitting around a table with other alien types. Got a big chuckle out of that one.

Spent a long time when I first started investigating the paranormal aspects of Bigfootery, including inviting a lot of speakers on all aspects...even had dowsers look for bones over a map (no, didn't work); had astrologers give us readings, and such. Even corresponded in the Track Record with Guttilla, Pye, Lapseritis (The Psychic Sasquatch).and you apparently know Henry Franzoni, who went on expeditions with the old WBS, and I printed his and Pam's reports.

So...I have given the psychic/supernatural ideas a fair hearing, I think, and have found them wanting. Something may happen at a later date, though, and I keep my options open. I always open the Track Record with, "keep your skepticals

on" as a warning; and go ahead and report everything that comes in (and many serious researchers have avoided the Track Record because of it), and leave it strictly to the reader to decide if true or false. One of my favorites is Lyle Vann...sends pictures of rocks and trees, and says he sees a Bigfoot move...some of the pictures I can even make out something, but not usually. He describes the Bigfeet as living underground as slaves of the aliens, etc and etc. Hey...maybe he's right, I can't prove he's not.

I suspected before I solicited Ray Crowe's opinion that he would take a dim view of a suggested connection between the bigfoot phenomenon and the UFO phenomenon. I also suspected that Ray would have as many anecdotes on that subject than anyone. Ray is a fellow who has, for a long time, collected and published reports on the matter with an open mind, so I value his opinion on the matter.

BFRO is an organization that gets a lot of feedback on the subject that they are not too interested in investigating or publishing. That organization has some distinguished scientists who contribute their research to the website. In some cases, they hold or hope to hold professorships at accredited colleges and universities. Therefore, no particular credence is given in that organization to a connection between bigfoots and UFOs. Sightings that include any mention of UFOs are basically discarded. Who can blame them? Professorships are difficult to earn and no one can afford to jeopardize their professional career by acknowledging a connection that is undemonstrated and scientifically unsound. An academic is taking enough of a gamble by getting behind the bigfoot phenomenon in the first place. When they're on ice that thin already, they can't afford to take any more chances by endorsing the view that there may be a connection between bigfoot and UFOs.

Bigfoot may be only a half step away from the UFO thing in the minds of the general public, anyway, but it is pretty darned important not to go there when the media is quoting you. Both subjects qualify as paranormal phenomena, though bigfoot researchers are often quick to dispute the fact that paranormal is appropriately used to characterize the bigfoot phenomenon. Either way, I don't think there is a scientist in an accredited academic institution anywhere who hopes to be the first to someday publish a provable connection between UFOs and

bigfoots. I suspect, though, that the sasquatch matter alone seems to be just a bit more credible, being more earth-based, and therefore a bit more potentially solvable. A scientist somewhere just might harbor a hidden hope of making a name for himself by making the genuinely important scientific leap of bringing the definitive sasquatch evidence out of the woods. I would bet that Dr. Krantz, Dr. Fish, and others like them expected the situation to have been nailed down by now. It must have been frustrating to such determined souls to see the bigfoot hypothesis remain scientifically unverified for as long as it has. Ten years ago, it seemed that official scientific recognition was just around the corner. What happened?

For one thing, researchers hoped that the numerous sighting reports they were receiving by way of bigfoot websites would permit more of a reactive, rather than a proactive, approach. In the mid- to late 1990s, the Internet emerged as a surprisingly effective means of gathering and transmitting sighting reports. A steady stream of sightings began appearing on the personal computers of field researchers and the few credentialed scientists who were willing to be involved in the effort. It must have seemed like it would be a matter of months, not years before someone would shoot one, hit one with a car, or find the proverbial bleached bones. An e-mail message would logically follow, notifying the field researchers and academics of the discovery, and the rest would be history.

Fat chance. The sightings that emerge on the Internet are promising, enticing, and even unprecedented in their timeliness, but they seem to lack something. The skeptic would be quick to offer the missing element: reality! The experienced bigfoot researchers' view is, however, more informed in this matter. Experienced investigators have seen too many reports, too many patterns, too much consistency, and even too many of their own field observations to dismiss the whole matter. For instance, I was once sent a summary from Dr. Meldrum of an expedition that he, cryptozoologist Richard Greenwell, and others took to the Sixes River area of northern California. They witnessed some startling events that were quite consistent with the bigfoot hypothesis. But somehow, the evidence always comes up a bit short of being scientifically conclusive. Meanwhile, the media turns a blind eye to promising evidence that is collected, or journalists trivialize the evidence that is presented by imparting a flippant or humorous tone to the piece they write.

Dr. Grover Krantz, the first academic advocate of the bigfoot hypothesis, was well aware of solid bigfoot evidence that was not taken seriously by his fellow academics or by the media. Krantz was also aware of speculation that there is some kind of connection between bigfoot and UFOs. But he knew full well that the struggle to gain wider consideration of the bigfoot hypothesis was tough enough without advocating any UFO connections.

Not that he felt that there was any connection. I don't believe for a second that he did. I'm not sure I do, either. I'm really not sure of much, but I am sure of one thing: Somewhere, we are missing an important piece of this puzzle. The fact that the bigfoot mystery is so overdue for scientific resolution suggests to me that we are somehow barking up the wrong tree; that we are somewhere missing something important that will help resolve the matter.

I don't know whether that missing key has anything to do with things that happen beyond our own solar system. But I know that suggesting an extraterrestrial connection based on flimsy circumstantial evidence is not the way to get serious scientific consideration of the bigfoot topic. I also know that there are serious bigfoot researchers who do not discard a possible connection to UFOs, and they are not all kooks. To those who are open to a possible extraterrestrial connection, the allure seems to be the opportunity to lump a few paranormal mysteries together into one big one. It might, after all, solve a lot of problems at once. It would help explain truly strange matters like how bigfoots could disappear, generate intimidating mental energies, and more.

There are two camps in most scientific disciplines that have competing ways of solving outstanding problems in their respective fields. They are the "lumpers" and the "splitters."

Whenever a new disease emerges in medicine, a new fossil or mineral is unearthed in geology, or a when a new life form discovered in the biological sciences, there is an effort to properly categorize it. In the case of fossils, the information about the animal or plant represented by the fossil is particularly incomplete. On the basis of what can be inferred about the ancient life form, one camp, the lumpers, would suggest the fossil be assigned to an already established family and genus. This is tempting because it shows that the fossil is already somewhat familiar to science, and that it fits into existing schema. The opposite camp, often made up of more impetuous upstarts, might

prefer to regard the fossil as something that does not fit into existing schema. The splitters would prefer that the new fossil be seen as a separate species, a new genus, or even a new family if the incomplete evidence is strong enough to justify the suggestion. The discovery would be much more momentous if the fossil represented a split from all previous finds. Such is the hope of the splitters.

The cordial war between lumpers and splitters also rages in geology, where geologic facies (distinct rock groups) are frequently being revaluated and reassigned to different epochs, eras, and periods. New techniques enable geologists to identify distinctions that were not previously resolvable, and the various units of geologic time are regrouped accordingly. On the bottom end of the geologic time scale, the dividing line between Paleozoic Time (700 million years before present) and Prepaleozoic Time (formerly known as Precambrian time) has been frequently debated, challenged, and redefined. On the top end of the geologic time scale, the dividing line between the periods within Cenozoic time has undergone tremendous redefinition as new techniques have improved the ability to resolve the absolute ages of adjoining rock facies of slightly different ages.

In physics, the lumpers want to accomplish the unification of physics. They hope to discover the single unifying principle that will commingle all the disparate theories into one grand theory. The splitters look for situations where the candidate unifying theories do not work and where still more new theories must be devised to resolve these trouble spots.

Most researchers see bigfoot as a great ape. To them, the bigfoot enigma is essentially a wildlife mystery. Others see it as a human relative, a hominid, and therefore an anthropological mystery. Still others see the bigfoot as a ufological mystery. Personally, I didn't want to go there when I jumped into this matter. I accepted the view that UFOs are sort of a taboo subject in the eyes of "Science."

But I kept hearing about the possible connection from people whom I respected, so I felt it deserved a chapter in this attempt to thoroughly treat the entire bigfoot subject. By bringing up UFOs in a serious book on bigfoot, I may be doing great harm to either the credibility of the sasquatch subject, or book sales figures, or both. On the other hand, it seems scientifically reprehensible to suppress the fact that such claims, and the circumstantial evidence to support them, do occur. It may be politically expedient to suppress the discussion, but

not particularly courageous, or even truthful. So, I decided to opt for truth and let book sales figures look out for themselves. I would help book sales figures greatly if I could identify the nature of the alleged connection between bigfoots and UFOs, *and* offer the bullet proof data that backs it up. But I can't. I can only suggest some alternative scenarios, and then use opportunity to work in a little physics or astronomy information while I have my foot in the door. Few topics offer more opportunities for tie-ins to other bodies of scientific knowledge than bigfoot and since I'm a science teacher, I've learned how to exploit the bigfoot topic that way. I'm not sure I want to put any credence behind the speculations because it begins to scare me, as it did Rob Johnson and Phil Bange.

The day after Rob had his alarming experience at Little Cavenah Lake, I spoke with him about it on the phone. I'll never forget that conversation. I kidded Rob about it a bit, yet Rob did not seem too amused.

Instead, he soberly replied, "Thom, I wish the whole thing had never happened. I feel like I can't tell anyone in BFRO what happened. They don't want to hear it. But it did happen! Both Phil and I saw it and it really scared us. It was the scariest thing I've ever been up against and it totally affected my enthusiasm for going out at night doing bigfoot stuff...I just wish the whole thing had never happened."

1 The Track Record, #21 September 1992, ã 1992 Ray Crowe

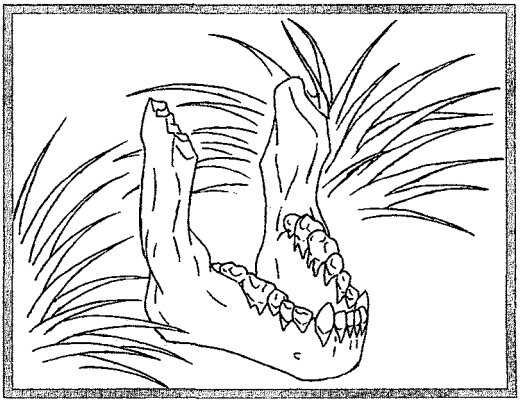
2 A response I received by anonymous remailer on Internet in Oct. 1994

3 Peter Guttilla letter published in "The Track Record" #21, Copyright Ray Crowe, Sept. 1992

4 From: donh@primenet.com (Don Hunt)
Subject: orange lights near Blythe ca
Date: Sat, 10 June 1995 18:16:30 MST
Keywords: orange lights

chapter eleven

Big Brother



No question comes up more than, "Where are the bones?"

Scientists want to see tangible evidence before they accept the sasquatch hypothesis. So does the media, and the public. It seems like a reasonable request. Bones ought to be lying around in the woods if such creatures as sasquatches really live there.

It's a classic "Catch 22" conundrum: Show me the bones and I'll agree that sasquatches need to be studied. I won't agree that they need to be studied until you can show me some bones. If we had bones to show, then there would not be any need to argue that sasquatches exist. We might study aspects of their habits and behavior, but the effort to prove their existence would be over if we had the bones to show. We would have the proof.

It is easier to understand why the proof is so hard to find if one spends a lot of time in the woods looking for animal remains. Very few scientists do this. Assuming bigfoot creatures do exist and that there really are remains somewhere, the two standard answers to why we don't have them yet are:

1. Nature recycles the flesh and bones of a dead bigfoot quite quickly, just as it does for the remains of other large omnivores. One does not often find dead bear or bear bones in the woods even though we know bear live there in substantial numbers. How many bones are we likely to find that demonstrate the existence of a creature that is a hundred times scarcer than bears? The fact that they are so rare and reclusive means that we are particularly unlikely to find the bones of a creature that dies in the exceptionally remote places that they frequent.
2. The creatures conceal the bones by burying their dead just as we

bury ours. Unfortunately, but obviously, they do not mark the graves for us to find. The Dora Bradley account suggests that this is indeed the case, at least some of the time.

My own investigation of the matter suggests that both answers are probably correct. If and when they sense that death is near, the sasquatch retreats to their own inner sanctum, which the Native Americans, and even some "paleface" investigators, say is underground. If they do die in more accessible places, I feel it is quite reasonable to suggest that such a cunning and intelligent creature would cart the dead one off for a proper burial. Remember, these are not solitary animals. They may be seen singly but that does not mean there is only one of them around. They are social and they operate in dispersed family groups. It is unlikely that they would leave their deceased brethren face down in the dirt where they expired. They likely revere the remains of their fallen comrades as we do, and they bury their remains out of respect as well as the need to conceal these remains.

There are still a few loose ends in this line of thinking. For instance, does the above logic account for all possible remains that would theoretically be left behind by a potentially stable population of forest-dwelling, nocturnally active sasquatches? I don't think so. Shouldn't there be accidental deaths of isolated individuals or injuries that may produce a severed body part? Road kills are the most obvious possibility, especially in light of the number of sightings that occur on or near highways.

When skeptics ask me why there are no bones that have been brought to light, I usually reply, "What makes you so sure that there are no bones already in the hands of some authorities somewhere?"

"Don't be silly," they reply. "We would know!"

"Whose job is it to tell you if such bones are found?" I ask.

"Why, the media I suppose. It would be the story of the century!"

"The same news media that refuses to take the bigfoot hypothesis seriously? I wouldn't be surprised to find that good evidence has been found more than once, but it was assumed to be a hoax and never got the attention it deserved. But beyond that, you might also ask whether it might not also be someone's job to make certain that you NEVER see the good evidence, including bones that have already been collected."

"So you think there is yet another conspiracy, this time to conceal the fact that bigfoots exist? I find it very hard to believe that anyone would conceal the anthropological find of the century."

Sadly but truly, I suspect that there is. I'm at a loss to explain WHY this might happen, though I could come up with several possible reasons. But first, let's take a look as to why I feel that solid bigfoot evidence, including bones, is already in the hands of some department or another within our federal government.

This compelling account was sent to the BFRO website on Sunday, August 8, 1999. Two days earlier, a complex of range fires was started by lightning strikes as convective thunderstorms formed in the hot, dry August air over Battle Mountain, Nevada. This area is a mining district, riddled with abandoned mining tunnels and shafts. The juniper and scrubby sagebrush of the mountainous terrain around Battle Mountain exploded into several simultaneous range fires in what would eventually be known as the Battle Mountain Complex Fire. This is the report that the BFRO received before the fires even got large enough to make the news:

7 August 99; Battle Mountain, Nevada

> I observed an animal wounded by fire moving on all fours not like bear. More like ape. Fire fighters captured animal, contacted local vet and medical doctor. U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Interior, and Bureau of Land Management on the scene. Animal tranquilized and moved to unknown location. Those at scene told not to talk about what they saw. Animal approx. 7.5 feet long/tall, human like arms and legs, face not like man or ape but mixed between. Genitalia: male, uncircumcised and human-like. Hair covering most of body except chest, chest has hair but sparse, hands with sparse hair, palms bare, with five digits with human opposition of thumb and 5th digit. Speech - attempted to communicate with care-givers once it realized they were attempting to care for it. Multiple burns to hands, feet, legs, and body; some 2nd and 3rd degree burns, using "rule of nines" approx. 45 percent of body with burns. Doctor and Vet working together providing care and moved it to unknown location locally. This notice given in violation of orders given by BLM, DOI and DF&W. Witnesses numbered

in the area of 20 - 25. Word is out in the government agencies and among the firefighters, since an M.D. was called out. Many thought a firefighter was injured.

Please note that I am a government employee of one of the listed agencies fighting brush fire in wilderness area of Nevada, (large scale fire approx 70,000 acres burned) and under orders not to disclose information. I believe a cover up is in the making, people need to know, the animal needs to be kept alive and studied and released in protected area.

On Monday, August 9, the fire got its first publicity from the news media. Before that, we at BFRO were unable to verify that there was indeed a fire in the Battle Mountain area. Late Monday I was finally able to determine from Forest Service sources that there was most certainly a large range fire in this area of Nevada. A USFS Incident Management Situation Report stated that, "It is a Type II incident (type I is the biggest), consisting of 13 separate fires. Pinion Pine and Juniper fuels are showing some resistance to control. Current threats are to private ranches, communication sites, historical sites, and wildlife habitat..."

The Battle Mountain Complex Fire had extended to 180,000 acres by Monday, August 9. This was not overly large for a range fire, but it consisted of several dispersed fires that were probably lightning caused. It was 40 percent contained by Monday and had 610 personnel fighting it at that time. Again, that's not an overly huge commitment of resources. Fires in Oregon of 40,000 acres can have twice that many folks. On that Monday there were twenty-two engines doing mostly building and ranch protection, two choppers, and they had spent $495,000.

Nothing else was heard from our witness despite e-mail attempts to reach him. Then, some ten days after the initial report, the witness contacted our investigator by phone. Here is the report that the investigator prepared after speaking with the witness.

Fellow curators—
Much to my surprise, tonight (8/19/99) at about 9:00 PM the reporting party of the Battle Mountain incident called me. I had been hopeful that he would call after I e-mailed him, but

today was the tenth day, and tonight or tomorrow I was going to post that I had had no contact, pretty much ending any further concern over the Battle Mountain thing.

Tonight I talked with the gentleman for about 70 minutes. Although he is maintaining strict anonymity, I was able to put together a bit of a profile of the individual. This fellow, whom I will give the pseudonym "Marty," is a male, full-time worker for a federal agency. Currently he is involved in the joint fire fighting efforts in Nevada. He has extensive EMT training and experience. He says that until this incident he had "seen it all" in fire fighting, and these days he stays mostly in the truck manning the radio. He is friendly, but not effusive. He is intelligent, likeable, and fairly observant, but he isn't outstandingly articulate. He is a matter-of-fact, low-key, seen-it-all kind of character. His regular duties may be in personnel, as he mentioned that tomorrow he would be seeing the M.D. involved in this incident about other matters regarding firefighting crews. It was obvious during our conversation that he was very tired. Our talk ended with "Marty" saying he had to get to bed to get some rest.

Approximately 20 people were in the immediate vicinity of the incident. All were debriefed and informed in no uncertain terms that this incident was not to be discussed. There has not been a word about the incident at the BLM fire HQ. He is very concerned about keeping his job, and says he would not look forward to taking a lie detector test. He created an e-mail address exclusively for reporting this incident. Although I had originally encouraged him to call me collect this lengthy call was on him so he could maintain absolute privacy. He is reporting this incident because he believes the information should get out. We agreed in any future communications to use the term "patient" to describe the sasquatch. I'll use that here.

The incident happened in the early afternoon. About 20 fire fighters were directly involved. The injured patient apparently wandered within sight of the fire crew, and was then sur-

rounded by the fire fighters. The patient "seemed to know that he was captured," because he soon gave up. Marty mentioned this several times—"he just gave up." The patient sat down on his buttocks, giving no evidence of a will to resist. ("Like a dog gives up, and then you can do anything with it.") The patient was laid out on the ground at first. His injuries were rather serious, including burns to the hands, feet, legs, and trunk, as well as much singed hair.

It didn't take long for medical services to get on the scene. The attending medical team included the regular M.D. for the fire crews, a vet that Marty didn't recognize, and one or more paramedics. The vet was taken aback at working on a creature so human-like, and he is reported to have allowed the physician to do most of the work. At some point Demerol and morphine were administered. The patient was placed on a spine board, which was too small. He was then placed on a regular ambulance stretcher. The sides were left down because part of the body hung over too far. The feet hung off the end.

A cut-down was performed to obtain an intravenous line, and fluids were administered ("lactated Ringer's" and "D5W"). No physical restraints of any sort were necessary upon the patient at any time. He either didn't or couldn't make any effort to resist. No firearms were on the scene, although self-defense was possible using rakes, shovels, and fire axes. During the treatment of his wounds and the efforts at life support, the patient communicated with moans, groans, and grumbling. Bowel sounds were heard by Marty, who was as close as three feet from the patient. No language-like vocalizations were heard. The patient responded to touch; specifically patting and stroking to calm him. ("You're not going to find an ape or a monkey responding the same way.") Two or three times Marty mentioned that the patient was especially responsive to a young Native American woman who started ministering to him right from the very beginning. The patient was removed from the scene in the back of a utility truck, not in an ambulance. Marty said an ambulance would have alert-

ed townsfolk and possibly news reporters, thinking that a fire fighter had been injured. No one would follow a nondescript van. The total time from initial sighting to extraction was estimated at three hours.

There was no urination, defecation, or vomit at the scene. The patient did not eat anything during that time. Serum and blood were leaking from the burned areas of the body. The area of the arm on which the cut-down was performed was shaved. The hair probably fell to the ground. There was significant blood from the cut-down site and from the subsequent insertion of a venous line, and some of that blood dripped to the ground. No one knows where the patient was taken. No video cameras were on the scene to film any aspect of the incident. The fire commander was present. He had a camera, and he did record what he saw.

The patient is described as being about seven feet tall—"Give or take a few inches." Marty does not give a weight estimate. Most of the body is covered by brownish hair about two inches in length; no gray hairs are evident. There are no mats noted in the coat. There is an odor about the patient. It is not an especially obnoxious odor. Marty calls it a "natural" odor, but he had a hard time describing it. He said it is similar to a strong equine odor. The head is not "sloped," the forehead is "heavy boned," the lips large, but human-like, the ears human-like and tight to the head, with the ear lobe attached, not dangling. The teeth were yellow, but he couldn't comment on the wear. The patient is "strong jawed." He could not remember the color of the eyes, but thought they might be brown. The head is about two times the size of a human head. There is hair on the face, but not on the palms or soles of the feet. There is great bulk to the patient, but there is no fat. He said his observations of the form of the body did not match with "that film with the one running into the woods," and he called that film a probable hoax. The hands are about 1.5 times a human hand; five fingers with opposable thumb. The fingernails are thicker and heavier, and one was chipped. The feet are large; five toes on each foot; no evidence of fractures,

injuries, arthritis, or deformation. The sexual features are those of an uncircumcised male, matching the human anatomy. Marty made the comment several times that these are not monkey or ape features. He felt he was in the presence of a very human creature.

Marty sounded tired during my interview with him. That is understandable, as he has been on the fire line for several weeks without much time off. He gave me much of the basic information above, but all the rest was fleshed out in answer to my questions to him. He wasn't hesitant in coming up with an answer to any of my questions but one. That was "what time of the day did this incident occur?" He fumbled a little, and decided it was early afternoon. This is also understandable, as morning blends imperceptibly into afternoon in long days on a fire. He wasn't evasive in any way, and always had a reasonable answer, but he did a lot of searching for the right word. There was a lack of excitement in his voice when he spoke of the incident, as though he were a weathered old federal employee. He said two or three times as he answered some of my questions that he was getting goose bumps. That I have heard before from credible witnesses, and I don't think it is something a hoaxer would come up with (please give me your opinions on this goose bumps business—you've all heard it). Some of the medical info he gave didn't ring perfectly true (e.g.: "IV line for cross-matching blood, if necessary..."), although he may have been trying to impress me with his medical knowledge, as he has been an EMT for many years. Nothing in this interview contradicts anything in his original report (except for "speech" below), although until questioned he didn't offer much new information. I tried two times to get him to expand on the part in the original report where he said the patient tried to communicate with the caregivers. He said there was nothing recognizable as speech, or vocal sounds other than "moans," "groans," and "grumbling." I asked about any hand signals or motions or movements as acts of communication, and got a fuzzy negative reply. Marty does not seem to have an especially wide knowledge of bigfoot matters. He indicated an awareness of

the Patterson film and a couple other things, but does not seem to be a student of these matters.

I have offered to speak with other people that were involved in this incident. I've offered to accept any and all collect phone calls from pay phones. I will go to his location if more witnesses can be brought together. However, Marty says he doesn't plan on telling anyone he was in contact with us, fearing for his job. It is open for me to e-mail him with, as he said, "any brainstorms" I have. He is e-mailing me a web site (possibly the same one that Thom Powell gave us), where I can follow the fire activity in that area. We had a good rapport, and future contact in either direction is possible. I have asked him to return to the scene and search for the hair from the shaved arm, or even the blood that dripped on the ground. He said he has access to the area, but probably won't be able to return until after the fires are controlled. A little dew might have glued some hair to the ground, but it has been very dry there.

Doug

In response to Doug's plea that someone return to the site and search for blood or hair evidence, Marty reported back to Doug as follows:

26 Sep 1999

Fellow curators—

I have a bit more on the Battle Mountain thing...I received a short email from Marty using his anonymous website. He was responding to my inquiry on whether he had been able to retrieve blood or hair samples. His entire message is:

"Dozer has torn area up. Nothing left. Word is there is still life. Location unknown. Believe within couple hundred miles. Later. Marty."

-Doug

Doug concluded that the dozer work seemed a bit too convenient and was likely a cover story concocted by Marty to explain away his inability to recover any physical evidence. Doug strongly suspected that the whole matter was a hoax on this basis and that is where the situation pretty much ended.

That conclusion has bothered me more than a little over the ensuing years. Certainly it is reasonable to conclude that Marty invented the bulldozing excuse to explain away his lack of evidence to support his completely phony story. It also occurs to me that a thorough chewing up of the site would be an obvious move if there really was a desire to conceal hair or bodily fluids from a badly burned bigfoot that was treated by emergency personnel at the site.

The place where I break ranks with my BFRO colleagues of the time is the more general assertion that the story was likely a hoax, and the inability of the witness to recover physical evidence was evidence of that fact. Forget the part about the bulldozer for a minute. I have a real problem with the suggestion that a person could concoct such a highly detailed fabrication and build it around a completely verifiable wildfire within two days of the fire's beginning. Then, the supposedly phony witness called our investigator at his own expense and talked for seventy minutes, offering highly detailed observations about the animal that he saw, which are consistent with everything we have come to understand about bigfoots as a species. Some of the observations are so original that even a skilled fiction writer would be hard pressed to devise them on such short notice: The jaw, the hair, the uncircumcised penis, the resigned demeanor...

An EMT that I asked said those were the correct emergency medical procedures for the injuries that were described. On the basis of the descriptions, he felt the person who described those emergency medical responses really was an EMT. Also, the person who described the agencies involved in the incident and the forest fire was able to rattle off the alphabet soup of agency acronyms and abbreviations convincingly. This person knew their government agencies. Virtually all the hoaxed reports we receive on the BFRO website are perpetrated by people with a transparently teenaged mindset that is generally preoccupied with sex. Hoaxers never make themselves available for follow-up verification, even by phone, and if they did, they would not remain on the line for seventy minutes

and never once contradict their original story. I have spoken with almost eighty witnesses face-to-face and far more over the telephone, and I am quite certain of this. The initial report and the ensuing contacts with Marty (the witness) has too much precise and convincing detail to fit the pattern that virtually all hoaxes fall into.

It is my feeling that this person was not lying, and this set of described events really happened. There is simply too much precise detail and a complete absence of error or contradiction. I asked a couple Forest Service contacts if any independent verification of the account could be gathered, in house. They tried but no luck. One contact was able to ask a deputy Incident Commander from the Battle Mountain fire if anything unusual happened at that fire. The answer was "No." Anything like a bigfoot sighting? "No."

Either nothing happened or the matter was successfully hushed. We will never know for sure. The report was dismissed as a probable hoax. It was never posted for public inspection on the BFRO website where it might have been seen by someone else who was present at the time and who might have contacted us to confirm or deny the account. It is indeed unfortunate that this sighting report was never posted on the website. Much more might have been learned about this incident as a result. I didn't pursue the matter at the time. I had no reason to suspect back then that the government would try to conceal such an event if it did indeed happen.

Three years after the event, I dug up the old files on the Battle Mountain matter and decided to try to send Marty an e-mail message and see what happened. Less than twenty four hours later, I was surprised to receive his reply:

> Thom,
>
> I had almost forgotten about the event until now. Have not spoken due to the classification that was put on it. The patient was taken to a university or some hospital that was not disclosed. As for verification, well other than my contact with you, I know of no one other than those there on the scene. As affidavit was signed under Dept. of Interior, and US Forest Service as:
>
> 1. Confidential under penalty of felony arrest and jail time,

2. Immediate loss of Government Service rank, loss of retirement, and benefits.

I doubt anyone will come forward except like this.

Several meetings were held in reference to "him." I do respect his rights of life and will always be a believer of their existence beyond any shadow of a doubt as seen with my own eyes, smelled with my own nose and heard with my own ears. His image is still as visible as it was then. No monster, no animal but a linage of native man. His trust in us to take care of him and recognize that harm was not meant when contact was made, knowing that care would be given to him...I am sure that Dept. of Interior knows where he may have been released. What more can I say?

Specifics, features, anatomy? Well, stand in front of the mirror and think of man's evolution.

-Marty

That may not be an airtight verification but it is not the way hoaxes usually go either. Hoaxers are never heard from again. Three years after the original claim, Marty is still around to check his e-mail and he is standing by his story.

That was the most detailed claim that government entities have incontrovertible proof in their possession. It is not the only such claim, though. In another region of the United States, an interesting incident came to the attention of the Forest Service in Mississippi and was later hushed up by the FBI when they took over the investigation. On Feb. 14, 2002, a local person named Jess sent in this brief report:

DATE: Thu, 14 Feb 2002

SUBJECT: Some kind of primate footprint was found in Stone County, Miss.

COMMENT: A dog was found a day after it disappeared with its head bitten off and its insides eaten out. Near the site

a six-inch wide, ten inch long footprint was found. It was determined by biologists to be a primate footprint. It had four toes and the biologists said it walked on two legs. I have searched the web looking for sites on primates that were carnivores and found nothing.

I was able to obtain a copy of an internal e-mail sent to fifty or so U.S. Forest Service employees by the district ranger who is responsible for the ranger district where the dead dog and the print were found:

02/07/2002

From: Judi Henry

Subject: monkey incident

As you have probably heard, State Game and Fish has had a report of a monkey loose on the forest in the Red Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Tracks around a dog carcass were found. Some folks from the Hattiesburg Zoo were called in to verify/identify the tracks. They have verified the tracks are real and are some kind of monkey. They also determined the monkey did kill the dog. They are researching to determine what kind of monkey it is.

Of course the story is all over the southern part of the district. We are also getting offers to hunt it down and kill it. If you are asked this question, we do not want it killed. Secondly, the exact location of incident is not public information. Lastly, the state is working with the zoo and we just need to let them handle it for now.

Judi Henry
DeSoto District Ranger
NF's of Mississippi

Further investigation indicated that it was true that a dog was killed

and partially eaten. The local zoo in Hattiesburg sent the first people who investigated the prints, which they determined to be primate. A Forest Service employee told me that USFS archeologists were instructed not speak about the incident. It was their claim that the FBI had taken over the investigation, it was the FBI who told them not to talk, and there was a second incident involving another carcass that occurred nearby. Rumor in the agency was that some kind of animal remains were being analyzed that were found on Black Creek, about ten miles from the first incident. Other Forest Service people who tried to learn more about the matter were told to "leave it alone."

Interestingly, the Pearl River, which forms part of the border between Louisiana and Mississippi contains some very swampy and inaccessible areas along its course. One such area is the Honey Island Swamp, which is locally known for strange incidents, one of which involves a tall, grayish ape that smells very bad. Whether there is any connection between local lore surrounding the Honey Island Swamp and these more recent incidents is impossible to know. But what is clear is that the U. S. Forest Service was aware of a situation that they turned over to the FBI.

Why would the FBI investigate dead dog matters? No one seemed to be suggesting that a crime was committed. It was a wildlife mystery. Why would the FBI investigate wildlife matters in general? And, why is a dead dog situation wrapped in a veil of secrecy. Had it been an escaped ape or monkey from the local zoo, it seems like the FBI would not be involved and secrecy would not be imposed. The fact that secrecy was imposed is firmly established. Even people within the Forest Service could not get basic information and were told to "leave it alone." If this event is bigfoot-related, it is fairly ordinary and unspectacular. Such pet, livestock, or wildlife depredations are nothing new. Bigfoots are not vegetarians. They are omnivores. Their diet includes meat and they seem to favor specific internal organs like the liver, particularly in the winter months when vitamin and protein rich foods are scarce.

What is spectacular about this report is the fact that it was possible to verify that the USFS did not dismiss the matter as a fraud or a joke. They took it seriously, personnel from a local zoo were also involved, and ultimately the matter was turned over to federal authorities. The federal boys hushed up the matter despite the fact that there is no hint of federal crime, national security concerns, or anything other than a

possible bigfoot incident. I would completely expect that the USFS and the FBI will deny any knowledge of the incident, or fabricate a story that the local zoo lost an animal, which is clearly not the case. The fact of the matter is that the FBI was notified of a rather ordinary bigfoot-related event that they investigated, added to their files, and covered up. Why they routinely cover up these matters is not clear at all. We may not know why they keep these matters confidential until we understand the origin and the capabilities of bigfoots much better than we do now. But in light of these incidents, it is difficult for the government to maintain that they have no information on bigfoots and that they do not take the matter seriously. They certainly do, and they probably have for quite some time.

I hold no hope whatsoever that the Freedom of Information Act would provide access to any further documentation on this matter. Maybe I'm too cynical, though. I invite another interested person to try.

Bigfoot remains may have also been acquired in Washington in the 1930s. Back then, a logging train moving through the tiny timber town of Startup, Washington reportedly struck an animal on the tracks and severed an arm. The arm was recovered and a professor from the University of Washington in Seattle came to town to pick up the arm. A local newspaper reported the incident. And that was, as usual, the last that anyone ever heard of it. This matter is not yet as well documented as the previous two incidents, but old-timers in the area remember the incident well.

Still other reports are as provocative as they are uncertain. I was contacted by a rural family from Horse Cave, Kentucky who described to me a curious one-car accident in 2001, which resulted in one human fatality. The residents felt that the fatality resulted from a collision with a bigfoot. The entire family maintained that the public was kept away from the scene of the nighttime collision, but these particular residents lived nearby and were able approach the scene of the wreck by sneaking through the woods. From the woods, they observed the authorities burying something beside the road, scrubbing the pavement to remove copious amounts of blood, and taking extraordinary measures to keep the public away from the scene.

The family had several sightings to relate to me on and around their isolated rural homestead. The wreck that they described was in an area of much prior bigfoot activity. They called the area of the wreck,

off of Highway 218, "bigfoot hill." It was easy walking distance from their house. After the wreck and the mysterious burial, they heard loud, mournful wails coming from the area for many nights. The residents were therefore very leery of visiting the location, not only out of concern for the fact that the creatures were still around, but for fear of being observed by locals who would wonder what they were after. As I recall, the mayor, who was also the undertaker, lived within sight of the location of the wreck. They sent me a detailed map to the location and I considered relaying it to a local investigator. Instead, I convinced the residents to try to investigate the matter more completely by themselves. Perhaps under cover of darkness they could probe the ground for an indication of what type of remains, if any, lay beneath the disturbed earth beside the road at the scene of the wreck. Eventually, they were able to do just that, and they phoned me later with the news that the earth appeared to have been once again disturbed, the soil had an intensely putrid smell, but no identifiable remains could be found.

I must say that after following up on plenty of such reports in the past, I was not at all surprised by this news. Par for the course, really. While it was regrettable that the residents did not get around to probing the earth sooner, such is generally the case. By the time such tantalizing reports reach us, it is generally too late to utilize the information even if it was accurate in the first place. But the credibility of the family was better than most such situations: they lived near Mammoth Caves where many unmapped caves provide potential safe haven for any manner of reclusive creature, they were in regular telephone, U.S. mail, and e-mail contact with me, the woman was a reverend, and the different members of the family were in complete agreement about the details of the various events that they witnessed. The family reported to me that they began to experience substantial hostility directed at them from unknown sources. Their property was vandalized. Someone tried to run them off the road. Someone tried to run over their son. The landlord wanted to evict them. Finally, they decided to move to another state.

Since I never met them face-to-face, it is the least certain of the situations offered in this chapter. The fact that the family also harbored a big interest in lake monsters and other cryptozoological phenomena is also seen by most as undermining their credibility. In many ways, this situation, however unverified, seems to complete-

ly embody the frustratingly uncertain kind of evidence that seems to characterize virtually all bigfoot investigation. Absolute proof is always lacking. Is it because we are in competition with forces that actively work to capture and conceal the evidence before it is made public? Or is it because the witnesses are delusional and the evidence does not exist in the first place? Or is it because the creatures do exist but they themselves actively obscure evidence of their own passing whenever they can?

I feel confident that there are too many accounts that are too consistent for the whole subject to be attributable to hoaxing and delusion. I never was a believer in government cover-ups and conspiracy theories. It was only when items began to disappear from my own home and when Allen and April shared with me the fact that their home had been similarly entered, their computer searched, and their phone tapped, that I began to seriously consider the possibility that something along these lines was actually taking place. One of the reasons why the Lewis family in Oklahoma wanted their real names withheld was the spying and wiretap they encountered. Now I have learned of two other bigfoot researchers, one in West Linn, Oregon and one in Cincinatti, Ohio, who have also discovered that their bigfoot archives were searched, and that telephones were tapped and electronic equipment was stolen.

The West Linn case involved Joe Beelart. He noticed a strange and unfamiliar click at the end of every phone conversation. He contacted the phone company. They agreed that something strange was going on with his telephone line. Then on 1/17/2003 at 3:30 p.m., Joe was talking and joking with an associate about going to the zoo and picking up a load of ape dung and spreading it around in the woods as a bigfoot attractant. They were laughing raucously about the idea when suddenly the sound of a laughing female could be heard by Joe and the other party in the conversation.

Joe's associate said, "Who's that?"

The laughing abruptly stopped.

Joe doesn't think it was a simple matter of having his phone line crossed with a busybody who was interested in his conversation. It is impossible to be certain. Joe has also seen evidence that his books and files were searched in his absence. The evidence to support spying and wiretap, like the evidence that supports the bigfoot phenomenon in general, is often vague and open to multiple interpretations.

My neighbor Frank experienced an even stranger event. Being a hunter with a couple strange experiences in the woods, Frank enjoys hearing about my expeditions and their outcomes. Shortly after the photos and electronics disappeared from my house, I gave Frank two bigfoot track casts. They were not originals, just copies, but they looked good and they had the documentation written on the back as to where and when they were collected. Frank had not even gotten around to hanging them up. He left them lying on the workbench in his locked garage. A few days later, Frank entered his garage to find both casts were not just broken, but shattered into thousands of small pieces all over the garage floor. Frank has no kids or pets who could have been responsible, and rather than being just broken, both casts were absolutely shattered in a manner that indicated intentional and forceful destruction. No tools or other valuables were missing from the garage and nothing else was even disturbed. Once again, it is tough to be sure that such uncertain events are any indication of deliberate attempts to sabotage our efforts.

Ray Crowe's long-standing prominence in the Northwest bigfoot community should have attracted some surreptitious scrutiny by now. Ray reflects, "So far as I know, I've never experienced it...wouldn't know if my computer was tampered with or not...and my files are dozens of pasteboard boxes of stuff thrown in when I'm done looking at it. Far too much for an interloper to even look through...(chuckle). One of these days I gotta get myself organized..."

By being skeptically minded, (or just a slightly disorganized packrat, as in Ray's case) one avoids becoming paranoid. If something sinister is going on, we want proof, or at least solid evidence. For lack of that, we can only speculate on the basis of an accumulation of suggestive circumstances. Yet the suggestive circumstances have begun to accumulate so substantially that if we discard over half of the circumstances we've uncovered, there is still a considerable body of evidence that defies alternative explanation. Therefore, I am left with two inescapable conclusions: First, bigfoots do exist and second, the government does not want us to know it. The big question that remains in my mind is: Why?

I can think of six possible reasons why secrecy might be imposed:

Government Paternalism

It is felt by decision makers in government agencies that the public is somehow not ready to accept the stunning fact that bigfoot-style creatures exist and at least one species of primates is comfortably ensconced in the forests of North America. Perhaps the justification for this arrogant position is derived from the Christian paradigm that humans are the sole heirs to the planet. The acknowledgement of another species so close to our own, even superior in terms of some sensory capabilities would destabilize the Christian paradigm that currently dominates western religious thought. We would no longer be seen as sole heirs to and lords of the planet. A major shortcoming of our Judeo-Christian Bible would be revealed, that being the lack of acknowledgement of these creatures.

I would not be surprised to learn that certain government entities hold the paternalistic view that we must be insulated from overly troubling thoughts and ideas. It is an undeniably presumptuous view to use as justification for a broad containment of information that is well within the public's right to know. Further, the Bible does indeed recognize the existence of these creatures, though it generally confers upon them the status of "devils" and antichrists which lurk in the wilderness and who render the wilderness an evil place. No doubt, attendance at Sunday services in pioneer communities was bolstered significantly by the realization among settlers that creatures lurked in the night on the margins of human habitation. Consultation with the local parson, who was generally the only educated member of a pioneer community, identified the mysterious forms as manifestations of the devil phenomenon that the Bible warned of and which could only be reconciled by regular church attendance.

Keep Mysteries Classified

Perhaps the government entities that we entrust as protectors are really just as baffled by this matter as anyone. As with the UFO phenomenon, the knee-jerk reaction of government, when confronted with a genuine and profound mystery, is to classify the entire matter as a secret. This avoids the uncomfortable alternative of having to stand up and acknowledge that the people we pay to understand threats and protect us from them have no real idea what is going on in this particular realm. There is an axiom that may exist within government

that boils down to: If we don't understand something, keep it a secret. That way no one will ever ask us to explain it.

Love of Secrets

People feel more important when they have secrets that must be kept. Government agency personnel need to feel their job is important and having important secrets that must be kept serves to validate their work. Every branch of government seems to have some kind of secret that must be protected and it is no surprise to me that the land management agencies want a secret also. Maybe someday they will even be called to Washington to brief the President or members of Congress on the big, important secret that the public is not prepared to know. What fun.

The Endangered Species Argument

If paternalism and love of secrets seem like unlikely reasons it may be because you have not worked in government. But another good reason to keep the bigfoot enigma imaginary in the eyes of the public is a perceived threat to resource extraction (that is mining and logging) on federal lands. It is certainly discussed in the boardrooms of mining and timber interests, and probably in federal resource planners' offices as well. Official acknowledgement of the existence of sasquatches would be an unmitigated disaster. If bigfoots were officially acknowledged, it wouldn't be long before an injunction was issued and most timber removal from federal land was halted. It is held that environmentalists will immediately seize upon the idea, spotted owl-style. They will then find a sympathetic federal judge who would issue an injunction that stops all logging and mining on national forests and rangelands which qualify as sasquatch habitat.

While it is probably true that preservationists would try to get the sasquatch declared as the ultimate endangered species, there is one big, but not so obvious problem with this whole line of thinking: sasquatches are in no way endangered. They may be rare, but they are not endangered. On their own, they keep their numbers down, though I also suspect that most estimates of their numbers are too low.

It is possible that recent increase in deer populations have also precipitated an increase in bigfoot populations. They do eat deer and that is a good thing because there are not enough other natural predators to keep deer herds in check. Deer populations have exploded lately

and we should hope that there are sasquatches in this world or we are soon to be absolutely overrun with deer.

Bigfoots do not seem to require virgin, old growth forests. All they seem to require is a food source and a place where they can be left alone. Short of clearing all of the forests away at once, I for one would strenuously argue that bigfoots are in no way endangered by forest policy and there is virtually nothing we could do to reduce their numbers, even if we set about trying to do so. The Wilderness Act of 1964 and subsequent amendments to it have insured the fact that sasquatches will always have safe haven. The only environmental matters that are a threat to sasquatches are the same ones that are a threat to our own survival as a species: global warming, overpopulation, and degradation of fresh water resources. In this respect, as bigfoot numbers go, so goes our own welfare as the human species. For this reason, the concealment of sasquatches existence is a tragedy, but it is quite real.

National Defense

As previously stated, we will only be able to understand why the public is being denied available information about sasquatches when we know more about the creatures and their capabilities. Since that information will not come from government sources, we are going to have to find it out ourselves. We already have a good deal of information to suggest that all of the senses of these creatures are more acute than our own. Not only is their sight, hearing, and smell more acute than our own, but they quite likely possess other sensory capabilities that we absolutely lack. They can project a rancid smell much like a skunk and the smell is so overpowering as to nearly incapacitate a person. This capability alone suggests a tactical military value in better understanding the sasquatch. I'm told that the military is already researching tactical use of overpowering but non-toxic smells. If this is not true, then it is an oversight on their part. It works quite well as an intimidating tool for the sasquatch. It ought to work just as effectively for the military or for law enforcement.

Other possibilities relating to national defense and tactical military value may not be as far-fetched as they first seem. Infrasound has already been discussed as a concept with tactical military value. The fact that sasquatches possess infrasound capabilities seems likely. When it comes to mental capabilities that we humans do not have, it

probably does not end there. Every researcher I know of who has been successful in putting themselves near a sasquatch has mentioned a sixth sense that the creatures seem to possess. I have tried to quantify this matter to the best of my ability, but, to attempt to quantify such a speculative matter is futile at present. There has been federal research money spent on such matters as ESP and remote viewing. Remote viewing (RV for short) used to be known as "astral projection" and it is the ability to formulate a mental picture of things and places that are beyond one's immediate surroundings. This phenomenon has been thoroughly studied by the Russian and the American military. We are told that CIA investigation of the matter has ended. Remote viewing capabilities are thought to exist in rare individuals. Some use remote viewing as an explanation for why sasquatches have been so effective at eluding all the traps we set for them, no matter how imaginative the traps and camera systems get.

Genetic Research

The final possibility centers on the fact that sasquatches may be human ancestors of such a close lineage that their genetic makeup offers the most intriguing possibilities for genetic research and cross breeding that have ever been considered. I favor the suggestion that sasquatches may be the enduring descendents of the *Homo erectus* lineage that is generally considered to be extinct. Neanderthal man, *Homo neandertalensis* by way of *Homo heidelbergensis*, is another distinct possibility. If either or both of these human ancestors endures today in the manifestation we call bigfoot, then the possibilities for interbreeding and other genetic experiments with humans become either intriguing or alarming, depending on which side of the ethical question one stands. We could greatly alter the sensory capabilities of experimental humans.

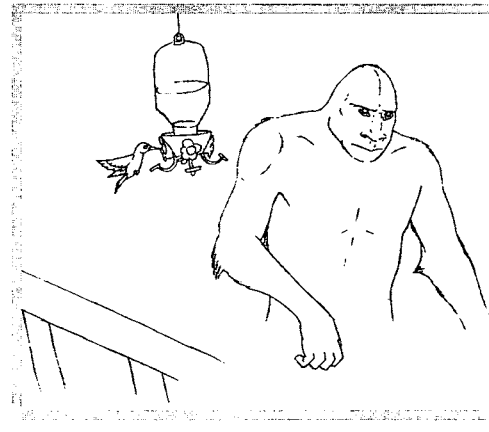
If a living bigfoot specimen or even a carcass were obtained, then the scientific possibilities, not to mention the genetic possibilities seem to be nothing short of vast. It is consistent with my understanding of bureaucratic thinking that the situation would be wrapped in secrecy until such time as it were better understood. Tragically, once things get classified as secret, that's the way they tend to stay; for things soon progress to the point where even minor advances in the knowledge are seen as having potential tactical military value or adverse social repercussions. It may have been classified a secret for

what was originally seen as an interim or temporary purpose. As more is learned, vexing matters emerge, and the veil of secrecy never gets lifted. To remove the secrecy now is impossible to consider because it would expose the fact that a fairly inappropriate, and maybe illegal secret has been kept from the public for so long. If this were acknowledged, then it would open a Pandora's Box of questions as to what other kinds of information has been kept from the public without adequate justification. The sasquatch subject can be easily minimized with humor and ridicule. When it is so easy to discredit those who take bigfoots seriously by questioning their sanity, why even consider revealing the truth to the public at this late date?

How tragic, yet how predictable it is that the government denies the public access to knowledge of a living human relative, an anthropological bombshell, and one of the planet's most remarkable beings.

chapter twelve

The Next Step



If the key to closer contact with sasquatches is to habituate them to human presence, the question then becomes how to habituate a sasquatch. It appears that the key to habituating sasquatches is to provision them. To provision is to provide for their needs; to make useful items, principally food, available. If we understood what type of shelter they needed or wanted we might be able to provision them with building materials but it seems that the forest is sufficiently endowed with building materials that they can get whatever they need without our help. The same is likely true for food, but there are many reports of livestock, produce, and groceries being stolen or accepted when offered as gifts to the local wildmen.

In our search for ways to accommodate sasquatches, food becomes the obvious first step, just as it would be if one were trying to build a relationship with humans. It may seem to be a cheap trick to try to bribe them with food, but this approach is not that different from taking someone out to dinner under the auspices of a date. We use food to win favor among other humans, and when training animals. Virtually every creature will avail itself of free food and possibly return to the place where provisions were previously obtained. Call it bird feeder psychology. What ever you call it, it works. It has been successfully applied to sasquatches many times, very often without the provider's knowledge of what he was doing. That is, many a rural resident has been fleeced for food without any awareness of the fact that they had sasquatches in their vicinity that they were unwittingly feeding.

There is a great deal of available food in rural areas that cannot possibly be monitored and defended under cover of darkness. Not only do farm fields offer vast amounts of ripening produce in season,

but the livestock that is reared in animal husbandry operations are also easy pickin's for an intelligent nocturnal operator. In fact, the biggest problem with trying to provision the local sasquatches may be the fact that there are so many other available food sources that it may take quite a while for the target creatures to come upon one's provisions against the backdrop of other possible food sources. Meanwhile, the common species in the wildlife community are likely to help themselves to the free eats and the well-intentioned sasquatch provider will find that they are providing for a whole bunch of other opportunists that will soon make pests of themselves.

Thus the provider must choose the provisions, the location, and other circumstances so that the target species, sasquatches, are the most likely beneficiaries of the provider's largess.

Landscaping For Sasquatches

With this basic approach in mind, it becomes possible to landscape a rural property in such a way as to increase the potential of having a sasquatch sighting, or better yet, to create a situation where sasquatches return periodically to avail themselves of the provisions that are left for their benefit. Outdoor and domestic writers from Martha Stewart on down have written on the subject of how to encourage bird nesting and feeding on one's property. Landscaping for wildlife is an increasingly popular idea. Gardening and hunting catalogs sell deer feeders. Farmers and ranchers have long known that salt and mineral blocks attract all sorts of wildlife.

Generally, folks want to encourage the more benign species of wildlife, such as birds and squirrels, maybe the occasional raccoon or fox. There probably are not too many people who want to encourage visitation by the biggest members of the wildlife community, such as cougar, bear, and wolf. But still, there are some. They may live in more remote locations and they may not be raising small children that could fall prey to such higher-order predators. If they are in ranch country, they may accept occasional livestock losses as a consequence of habituation of the larger species of wildlife. More often, they didn't knowingly do anything at all to encourage predator traffic; it showed up all by itself. Most wildlife doesn't need much encouragement if one lives next to large tracts of undeveloped land. People who live in such places do not usually decide to encourage wildlife activity. Rather, they learn to accept it. But if

such persons were to first accept the much ridiculed fact that bigfoots exist, and then to accept the even more improbable assumption that it is possible to encourage such esoteric creature activity, then it becomes quite possible that sasquatch visitations can be both accommodated and actively encouraged.

First the question must be answered as to why someone would want to do this. The creatures happen to be pretty scary. Two subtle truths seem to be emerging from careful study of thousands of sighting reports and interviews with witnesses who have had close encounters. The first one is the fact that, while obviously dangerous owing to their imposing size and speed, bigfoots do not seem to be hostile or ferocious. As long as someone does not point a gun at one or make some other form of threatening move, I do not consider sasquatches to be any particular threat to humans. In fact, it seems clear to me that they revere human children and have been seen on many occasions to spend long hours observing them from afar. Bigfoots seem quite capable of understanding when a homestead is tolerant of their presence and in such cases they will become slightly more conspicuous in their behavior.

The second reason to tolerate and even encourage bigfoot activity is that it appears to those who have succeeded in doing so that the presence of other, more dangerous wildlife, such as cougar and bear, greatly decreases or disappears altogether when the sasquatches are around.

As a researcher, I have begun to focus on encouraging those who are reporting sasquatch activity to take measures to encourage it. This seems to be a most productive direction to pursue if the goal is better documentation of the species. I have learned the hard way that my presence, as an outsider and visitor to the location where sasquatch activity is occurring, immediately brings about a retreat in the sasquatch presence. Of course, the bigfoot skeptics assert that I am being deceived by charlatans. The claim that the sasquatches retreat whenever I show up is seen as just a little too convenient. I counter that after years of studying not just sasquatches but also the people who report encountering them, I am quite certain that I can tell the difference. But beyond that, it squares with my sense of what is logical that a creature that is quite committed to not being found would retreat from view whenever strangers arrive, in the same way that a moonshiner will conceal their activities whenever any stranger arrives

on the scene, in the event that the stranger represents the very authorities that must be avoided and deceived at all costs.

So, encouraging and enabling those who are certain that they have sasquatches in the vicinity accomplishes two important goals. First, it empowers the resident with advanced strategies that are intended to bring the activity further into the open than it already is, by building on whatever level of trust has already been achieved by the residents of the site. Second, it focuses the residents' awareness on the events that are taking place and the things that they may have been previously unaware of, that may be the reasons why sasquatches are taking an uncommon interest in their homestead.

Location is the most important factor to consider. A homestead that is of particular interest to a sasquatch must be accessible to them. This means the homestead must border a forest and the bigger the forest, the better. A remote homestead with few or no neighbors is the ideal situation, but at the very least, the homestead must adjoin a forested ravine that serves as a wildlife corridor that connects to larger tracts of forest. To a homestead that borders on national forest land, an eventual nocturnal visit by a bigfoot is a virtual certainty, though there is only the remotest of chances that the residents would be aware of it when it happened. Very often the residents are already aware of nocturnal calls, signs, and occurrences. They usually attribute these strange happenings to more familiar wildlife visitors.

For instance, a rural resident who raises chickens or rabbits and who lives on the edge of the national forest land is certain to be cased by sasquatches who will eventually make a move for the vulnerable livestock. All that the resident knows is that one morning he or she came outside and discovered the rabbit hutches were open and a few bunnies were missing. The resident might be mystified as to how the hutches came to be opened but they blame the kids for failing to properly secure the latches. They attribute the actual depredation to foxes. They may not have connected the depredation of rabbits or chickens to the agitated state of their dogs in the middle of the night, or maybe a few other events that don't seem related, like an apple tree that has been fleeced for fruit and a broken electric fence wire around the orchard.

The landowner might look around for tracks to confirm suspicions about what kind of animal is responsible for the depredation. Most of

the time there is not enough bare earth on the homestead to provide a clear imprint of the nocturnal raider. It is always a bit uncertain and most of the time, livestock losses are correctly attributable to ordinary wildlife like foxes or coyotes. A landowner who has become attuned to the signs can often rule out some possibilities.

Coyotes are frequently blamed for stock losses and animal carcasses found in the woods, but in my experience they are also incorrectly blamed for certain things like dead deer that are found in the woods. While it is not impossible for coyotes to kill a deer, it is much more difficult and unlikely than most people realize. Coyotes will, more typically, move in on the remains of another animal's kill and strew the remains about, leaving enough tracks to create the impression that they are responsible for a kill that they simply availed themselves of in an opportunistic, after-the-fact manner. This is not to suggest that every mysterious slaughter of farm animals is attributable to sasquatches, but it is a fact that farms that are situated on the edge of large forest tracts experience livestock depredation at the hands of sasquatches much more often than anyone realizes.

This is perhaps the most surprising discovery that I have happened across through my years of researching sasquatch sightings and interviewing witnesses. I have learned to identify situations where sasquatch visitations may be occurring and I have found that landowners are generally unaware of the fact that many odd events that they have witnessed over the years suggest that sasquatches periodically visit their farmstead. Further, it is not coincidental that nearby geographical features bear names like Devil's Ridge, Skookum Lake, Splintercat Creek, Diablo Canyon, Indian Creek, and Spirit Mountain. Such names are a telltale sign that the area has a history of bigfoot sightings that date back to pioneer times. I suspect that sasquatch sightings by early settlers were often attributed to a vestigial Indian presence that was believed to exist after the indigenous tribes had actually been extirpated. If my suspicions are correct, names such as Indian Creek or Squaw Creek may often suggest sasquatch sightings during the first waves of settlement by Europeans.

I have had so many discussions along this line with landowners over the years that I have developed a sort of checklist of events which I use to identify events that landowners experience that help me resolve the bigfoot possibilities. None of the events listed below can

be used as an indication of sasquatch activity in and of itself, but when several of these events take place in a remote location, chances are, bigfoots are in the area.

Things Missing

- Missing livestock
- Mutilated livestock that is missing specific organs, specifically the liver
- Livestock cages that have been carefully opened and the animals removed
- Missing horse grain
- Missing food from an outdoor freezer
- Missing milk: A milk cow that occasionally has no milk to give when it ought to
- Missing smoked meat or fish from a smokehouse
- Missing fruit from ripening fruit trees
- Missing vegetables from the garden
- Missing food from a camping cooler

Things Found

- Dead wild animals or livestock found in the nearby woods
- Dead animals found in improbable places (like a dead deer found in the crotch of a tree high off the ground
- Big bare footprints in the mud near the horse corral (you should be so lucky, tracks are rare)
- Piles of bones or feathers neatly placed
- Dead animals that have been partially or completely skinned without the benefit of sharp tools
- Very large animal feces piles found on the property or in the nearby woods
- Finding the door to an outdoor freezer left open in the morning

Things Damaged

- Electric fence wire that has been torn down
- Bent and twisted trees found along trails and roads
- Camping cookware that has been strewn about
- Barn implements that have been strewn about
- Bent gates that do not have the look of vehicle damage
- Damage to house siding or window trim
- 'Twist-offs'- small trees with tops that have been bent, twisted, or broken off some 7 to 8 feet above the ground

Things Heard, Smelled, or Felt

- Unusual howls or screams, often very loud, that are heard in the distance or in the nearby woods
- Extremely agitated nighttime behavior by farm dogs
- Lots of vigorous barking by dogs on surrounding farms
- Fearful reaction, usually after dark, by farm dogs that are otherwise aggressive
- Horses that become very agitated and may even break out of the pen at night
- A horse that becomes agitated and distracted while riding in the woods
- The sound of knocking or clacking of rocks emanating from the nearby woods at night
- Knocking or scratching on the side of the house at night
- The sound of stones hitting the roof at night
- Children claiming that something is looking in their windows at night
- Children claiming that something is watching or spying on them while they are playing
- The distinct feeling of being watched while doing farm chores, tending stock, or working/walking in the woods
- The sound of footfalls that parallel your direction of travel as you walk in the woods
- The sound of breaking of sticks, twigs, and branches as an unseen creature is heard to be moving loudly through the woods
- A very strong odor that resembles some combination of rotting garbage, a dead animal, a wet dog, and a person who has not showered for weeks; sometimes also described as carrying a sulfur or rotten egg character. It can be strong enough to make one nauseous
- A suddenly very quiet woods devoid of the usual bird, critter, and bug sounds
- The sound of something moving outside your window at night
- A chilling feeling that something is "out there" that may awaken you abruptly from a deep sleep

Sasquatch evidence is usually quite subtle, indistinct, and inconclusive. The clues are usually vague and open to multiple interpre-

tations. A keen observer with a questioning mind is usually necessary to recognize the clues. The words of experienced trapper Steve Kiley can be used to summarize the situation nicely. Trapper Steve unified all of the indications detailed above into a succinct statement that one should bear in mind when looking for indications of sasquatch presence.

Trapper Steve's Principle:
Look for the things that are out of place...the things about the situation that are not quite right.

It must be repeated that any of these events or observations alone are insufficient to conclude that there are bigfoots about. It is the very nature of these wily creatures to deliberately obscure evidence of their presence, especially when operating on the margins of human habitation. But sighting report patterns that I have studied point clearly to these events as good indicators of sasquatch presence, particularly when several of these events are being observed in remote places that border large forested tracts.

The events and observations detailed above are often experienced by campers, hunters, and other recreational forest users. They sometimes precede actual sightings. As a researcher, I have received many reports from campers that included some of the aforementioned events. I used to make a greater effort to visit the locations where such things were observed by campers. After doing so many times, it has become less of a priority for me. I have found that the likelihood of having a second encounter at the exact same place is not as great as it might seem. By the time the information reaches a researcher such as myself, a bigfoot creature that may have been present is long gone, or at the very least is unwilling to make an appearance for my benefit.

But sightings around rural residences are different. There is plenty of reason to expect the creature to someday return or even hang around, so it behooves us as researchers to inform the residents about what to be looking for in the future and what to do in the event that future observations suggest that "the locals" have returned. Attentive and aware rural residents make ideal observers because they are not just visiting the potential sasquatch habitat. They inhabit the local landscape just as surely as do the bigfoots and the other wildlife. Their presence is familiar to the other creatures so there is much more likelihood that the people living at a particular farm or ranch will be seen

as a fixture, rather than a potentially threatening visitor. Also, rural residents have the opportunity to observe the situation all day every day, or 24/7 as we say nowadays. Visitors, even researchers, tend to arrive midday and on weekends, which is such a predictable pattern for intelligent creatures that trying to make meaningful observations as a researcher working on that schedule is futile.

At least once a year I visit someone in a remote place who may be having a party, or who has welcomed me to their isolated homestead for some other reason. When the situation presents itself and when no one else is listening, I will offer that I am one of the strange folks who take the bigfoot phenomenon seriously. Despite their smirk, I explain that if such creatures exist at all, then my research indicates that they ought to be found in just the kind of setting where this person now lives. Do they have any observations to share that suggest that this is the case? Generally, the answer is an immediate, "No."

Naturally, the person might ask what kind of observation I am thinking of, and I suspect they are expecting me to say something along the lines of a direct, eyeball sighting. Then I offer at least a partial list of the events mentioned above. In virtually every such instance, the person's complexion turn ashen, they put a hand to their forehead, and suddenly become very much more curious about the creatures that they never took seriously until this particular moment. When they recognize six or seven events that were always a bit of a mystery to them, they are almost relieved to find that there is a coherent explanation for several matters that they never understood. But the realization that bigfoot may lay at the heart of the explanation usually evokes a sudden concern for theirs or their family's safety.

Not all researchers agree, but my take on the situation is that if these creatures were in fact the monsters that mythology portrays them, lots of vulnerable rural residents would have been picked off by now. But we do not hear of isolated rural residents disappearing and that is because bigfoots do not eat people, and they do not behave with hostility toward rural residents and forest users who do not act with hostile intent. In fact, even the very rare hunter who claims to have fired upon one still leaves the area without personal injury. I am aware of absolutely no reports of injury or death inflicted by bigfoots upon grown-ups or children at isolated homesteads. Bigfoots are capable of many type of intimidating behavior to be sure, but they do not seem

to actually inflict injury on people as much as they just try to scare them out of the area.

To the contrary, I have spoken with many witnesses who have observed that the familiar presence of predators like mountain lion or bear was reduced or completely absent when the bigfoots were around. The Hoyt family in Washington was in complete agreement with this view. I have taken to reassuring residents who are concerned about the possible threat from bigfoots that they are probably much safer with bigfoots around. Certainly their children are. There are not many statements that I will make with complete certainty but here is one: bigfoots revere human children. They do not harm them. Children may actually be a big key to bringing the bigfoots out of the woodwork, so to speak.

Homesteads that are experiencing repeat visitations by bigfoots are very rare and very important to the goal of habituating bigfoots to humans, because it suggests the things that humans could do to bring bigfoot activity out into the open. Raising a variety of livestock and lots of it seems to be one common thread. Gardens and orchards are another. The reason for this is easy enough to understand: those homesteads are provisioning the bigfoots, whether they know it or not. But there are a few other common threads that seem to tie these homesteads together. The most subtle but potentially significant one is a live-and-let-live spirit of animal accommodation. They can be hunters but they still empathize greatly with animals. They may rehabilitate injured wildlife or livestock, or they may care for and raise a lame pet that would normally be euthanized. They may raise many animals as pets.

It may sound a bit far-fetched, even to bigfoot enthusiasts, to suppose that bigfoots are capable of assessing the level of compassion of a rural family. Perhaps so, but it is precisely this kind of subtle pattern that the modern researcher must learn to look for. Bigfoots are nothing if not creatures that are consummately attuned to subtleties. Their very survival may be tied to their ability to identify the kind of situation where their presence will be tolerated. As it turns out, it is no great stretch to determine the level of compassion that exists in the minds of the residents. Cages and pens around the property that contain animals in various states of rehabilitation is an easy matter to observe from the woods. Bigfoots do a lot of watching. It is an easy matter for them to observe a resident attending to wounded, sick, or

crippled creatures. And the reason why bigfoots would care to distinguish such folks from the rest of the rural populace is also fairy easy to suppose. Bigfoots raise young too, and they need a place to rear them where their juveniles can make mistakes and learn from them without venturing into immediate peril from an armed rancher that is hell-bent on wild animal eradication.

Allen and April observed a juvenile bigfoot at very close range and saw no evidence that an attending adult was anywhere near. From this observation, I infer that the adults sometimes decide to leave the juvenile in a reasonably secure location and venture off to attend to other matters or to accustom the juvenile to independence and isolation, much like humans do when our offspring reach the teen years. We might leave the teenager to watch the house for a few hours or even days, but we would also ask a neighbor to keep an eye out for problems. And so it may be with bigfoots who need to have a place to leave their young where death will not result if the juvenile ventures too close to human activity.

When I find a homestead that may be experiencing this very sort of thing, I will try to determine who seems to be unfazed by it. I then undertake to brief them on how they might further encourage the bigfoot activity, which is really just an application of psychology and generosity.

Provisioning:

Provide food for the creatures but do it in a manner that gives them a chance to accept the provisions without having to risk traps and restricted places. When provisioning bigfoots, be aware of the possibility that human illnesses and diseases are transmissible to them and that routine human maladies like the flu may be lethal to them, as is the case with other higher-order primates. Vulnerability to human diseases may be a concept that is well understood by bigfoots and a principal motivation for their enduring avoidance of human contact. Do not handle food when ill. Home grown produce is preferable to store bought items that may have been handled by many unknown people. Bananas are an ideal store-bought item since they come in natural packaging and the contents are untouched by human hands. It may be cliché to feed bananas to apes or ape-like creatures, but there are practical reasons for this: they are

not expensive, they keep well, they are a complete food, and they taste good. They are germ-free inside the peel.

Bigfoots are not vegetarian. They will kill livestock like chickens, rabbits, and goats for food, but they also have been observed to accept cooked chicken, meat and fish from the smokehouse and the freezer, and pretty much anything else right down to picking through the garbage can. So much for the germ-free food-handling precaution.

Though they are not vegetarians, they have been long thought to be vegetarian because they eat a great deal of vegetable matter when it is available. They will virtually clean a fruit tree of ripe fruit. Bigfoot scat is even a very good indicator of what type of fruit is ripening in the nearby orchards. Fruit trees at abandoned homesteads and old mining claims are favorite seasonal feeding sites for sasquatches, as well as much of the other local wildlife. This and all the other observations offered above can be assembled to suggest a layout for a farmstead that maximizes the potential for attracting the local sasquatches. Start with a farm surrounded by forest, preferably a vast tract of national forest that continues into distant mountains. Add a few boisterous, laughing children to maximize the creatures' inherent curiosity about the homestead. Plant an orchard, a vegetable garden, and a berry crop. Install rabbit hutches, a chicken coop, and a place to rehabilitate wounded mammals and birds. Have an outdoor food storage freezer located under an overhanging roof but otherwise accessible from the woods. Add a smokehouse, a horse in a corral, and a milk cow. Play Native American music, new age flute music, and other kinds of spacey music a lot. Have the gang over for a Friday night drum circle around a campfire.

In a general way, one can see that I am describing a farmstead and a lifestyle right out of the Mother Earth News. That is essentially the fact of the matter. If there is anything to this thinking, then it starts to look like sasquatches resonate with those who embody a lifestyle that is harmonious with an agrarian lifestyle, a natural orientation, and a concern for the welfare of wildlife. Some may find this a bit too contrived, too counterculture, and even too political to be anything close to the fact of the matter. I can see their point. Though I didn't intend to characterize sasquatch attraction in those terms, if the "earth" shoe fits, I suppose one must wear it. It should come as no particular surprise, then, to suggest that the best way to attract a sasquatch is to

project a slightly "earthy" image in the way the homesteaders live on their rural acreage.

What we characterize as an "earth" perspective is really nothing more than a newer version of that which the Native Americans have always embodied. So, to be fair, it may be more correct to describe the attitude and lifestyle as Native American and this is really the most telling description of all, since it points sasquatch researchers firmly in the direction of Native Americans when we search for answers to the question of what is really going on with the sasquatch enigma. I don't have all of the answers to the sasquatch enigma but I do have a pretty good idea who understands it better than anyone else and that is our Native American brethren. Unfortunately, they seem none too interested in sharing the information with us. Perhaps they would counter that statement by saying that we have shown no particular interest in hearing what they had to share on the subject, and if they did tell us, we probably would not believe what they had to say about the phenomenon.

Sasquatch Research and Experimentation for Forest Visitors: Most people who have an interest in investigating the bigfoot phenomenon for themselves do not live in a place where they stand much chance of bringing the bigfoot activity to them. They want to try their hand at bigfoot field research but they must travel somewhere to do it. They live too far away from the nearest large forested area where bigfoot activity might sometimes occur, so the concept of habituating a bigfoot to their presences with constant provisioning is difficult or impossible.

Gathering good data, good evidence, or close range observation can still be attempted by forest visitors who live in town but frequently visit the forests and mountains. It must be understood that sasquatch activity is statistically rare, but it can be encouraged by forest visitors. The chances of any one person or group of people being successful at precipitating a sighting are quite small, but the more people who attempt it, the better the overall chances of success. The more often a person returns to a spot that seems to offer some potential for bigfoot activity, the better.

One reason I enjoy pursuing the bigfoot matter is that I like to visit and camp in remote forest places. I have been camping since the Boy Scout days of my youth so I am comfortable with camping out and it

is no great accomplishment to successfully set up a camp and hang out in the woods. In fact, that is the problem. I like camping but just setting up a camp is no particular challenge. I prefer to have a focus for the outing after the camp is set up; something more challenging than sitting in a sand chair, putting wood on the campfire, and drinking a beer.

Since taking up an interest in observing and gathering bigfoot evidence, I am no longer bored with camping. There is a seemingly endless list of promising locations to investigate, strategies to employ, and things to watch and listen for while camped out. I have a stronger desire to explore remote places. Bigfoot stories certainly liven up a dull campfire. I have become more attuned to motions and sounds in the night. I have a stronger desire to understand the origin of any strange noises, and I watch more carefully for unusual things while exploring the woods. I am more observant of tracks of all kinds, and I have become much better at noticing subtle signs of animal activity. The whole matter has heightened my enjoyment of camping because it gives me another big reason to go camping. I try to always keep Trapper Steve's principle in mind as I hike and explore: "Look for the things that are out of place...the things that are not quite right."

Of all the attraction strategies that I have acquired from other dedicated researchers, the suggestions of Ron Morehead are some of the best, and if success is worthy of imitation, then Ron's suggestions should be highly regarded. Ron and Al Berry recorded the most impressive bigfoot vocalizations I know of. I have gotten to know Ron through the BFRO and I have a great deal of respect for the work that he and Al did in order to obtain the Sierra recordings.

They were invited to investigate happenings that disturbed a family who had been using a remote spot as a hunting camp over a period of years. Al was an investigative reporter who was invited to visit the Sierra camp and was expecting to uncover a hoax. Ron was one of six hunters at the camp that had been experiencing unusual sounds and witnessing large five toed foot impressions. Al Berry was able to capture very clear vocalizations emanating from the nocturnal woods around their shelter. His recordings were thoroughly analyzed by an audio expert. He could find nothing to suggest they were hoaxed. In fact, the frequency ranges of the sounds were found to be well beyond human capabilities. Knowing Ron and Al as I do, I have no doubt that their recordings are the real deal.

They have produced two CDs (www.bigfootsounds.com) that detail the entire story of their efforts in the 1970s and include high quality digitized versions of the vocalizations that they recorded at this remote camp in the high Sierras of California.

Here are some suggestions from Ron. These suggestions may help amateur researchers who want to gain a better understanding of these elusive beings:

> "To summon the creatures or bring them in close I have tried the following with success, and I believe anyone can do the same if he or she has patience and does not succumb to fear or disbelief. Of course one needs to be in an area where credible bigfoot activity has been reported. Have a fixed exposed camp and a friend or two that share the same motive— winning the creatures' trust. These creatures need to feel secure with the environment.
>
> When I'm walking in the woods, I'll find a small (two to three-inch diameter) log and periodically strike it sharply two or three times against a larger log or tree trunk with a measured beat. The more resonant the sound, the better it carries. You may or may not hear a report back, but if you do and you are certain there are no other humans in the area, you'll know you've got a creature's attention. Rocks struck together, one in the hand against a larger one in the ground, also work well in the same way. I usually try sequences of three strikes, and not too often. In the alternative, of course, if nobody's around, you're going to strike out! I do not recommend trying to be stealthy while walking through the woods. For this communicative effort, it's okay to be bold.
>
> I have learned to imitate one or two of the Bigfoot vocalizations we've heard, and most anyone can do the same—at least with the simplest sounds. During the day, on a traverse through the woods, after I've struck rocks or logs, I'll give a whoop or a yell. At the same time, because the creatures seldom show themselves or their presence except on their own time and terms, I feel it's important to not appear too aggressive or to overdo this sort of thing. If I'm lucky enough to get

a positive or suggestive response to a call, then I'll concentrate on trying to communicate with them in my mind, using my thoughts to convey my positive feelings about them that I would like to have their trust and closer contact. This attitude must be an honest one. Nonaggressive, non-fearful, laid-back "at one" feelings. After dark, they may come in close, knowing they can remain hidden from sight. You will hear their sounds, and you shouldn't be afraid, or embarrassed, to "talk" to them. Using a calm voice talk to them as you would a friend. If this effort was received, try your positive thoughts. Imitate their sounds. As we have experienced, they may talk back. Have a recorder ready, and your camera, as well. However, most cameras use a flash that may stop activity for the evening. If you shoot with a flash or shine a light, chances are you're only going to get one chance—but under the right circumstance, maybe it's worth it to take that chance.

I hope you will try these simple techniques and others like them of your own invention in the field. If you do, take time to record your thoughts and observations. This scientific method and documentation can be very important in the long run. The approach may seem simple, but I know it can be effective."

-Ron Morehead

As with everything else in this book, these suggestions are not offered as sure-fire methods of attracting sasquatches. What works for one person may not work for another. Most of what other researchers swear by has been utterly unsuccessful for me. I find that they are simply suggestions that can be formally or informally tested by field researchers. It is hoped that feedback as to their effectiveness, or lack of, will find its way back to Ron or me. I have had the greatest successes when I was not consciously trying anything at all, except putting myself in places where sasquatches ought to be. In any case, it is hoped that feedback on the effectiveness of these and other techniques can be offered in future editions of this book.

Bigfoot researchers tend to operate independently and secretly,

always guarding their most cherished techniques and most promising locations. This is a mistake. It is an understandable mistake that is ordinarily motivated by the hope that they will be the first person to accomplish a huge stride in gathering the definitive evidence that will rock the world. This hope has been pursued for so long and by so many without success that it should be increasingly clear that a different approach must be employed if we are going to get anywhere in the dubious pursuit we call "bigfoot research."

The skeptics advise us to give it up. I submit that greater degrees of cooperation and sharing of tentative results is the most promising approach. The Skookum Expedition of 2000 is case-in-point that better results can be acquired when team work and cooperation are employed to their best advantage. It is therefore worth noting the kindness of Ron and others who have shared their ideas and attraction strategies, however tentative and uncertain. I greatly enjoy the process of experimenting with these various ideas. It makes for very entertaining campouts. We may be serious in our views that sasquatches do indeed inhabit certain places in the forest landscape, but this does not stop us from having fun with the possibilities for experimentation. We explore, we experiment, we play music, we joke, and we laugh. Sometimes the woods seem to talk back to us. We have had several strange but inconclusive experiences. Someday something dramatic will happen and we will likely be scared shitless. It has made for some of the most enjoyable campouts of my life, even if the much-pursued "better evidence" is never obtained.

I know of at least one person who is rooting against me. My cousin Martin lives in Tumalo, Oregon and is an author who writes about the history of his area. He resides in Deschutes County which has both contemporary bigfoot sightings and a number of geographical names (like Cultus Lake and Devil's Lake) which suggest an historical awareness of the sasquatch phenomenon. Martin knows I pursue the collection and presentation of better evidence to scientists and the general public. Martin has his doubts about the whole matter but he hopes I never succeed, just the same. If there are such creatures, Martin hopes they are never found and simply left alone. Martin's Native American heritage (he has some Chippewa ancestry) starts to show when he reasons that bringing one out of the woods would be the worst thing for them as a species. Martin is in good company. Henry Franzoni knows knowledgeable

members of the Nez Pierce tribe who feel precisely the same way. It's nice to see that, for once, the Native Americans seem to have something in common with the federal boys who also want to keep the bigfoot matter firmly under wraps.

Yet I remain resolute in my position. I know full well that I don't have the kind of time that must be invested in the pursuit of better evidence but I certainly hope that someone else does, and that they succeed very soon. I advocate the presentation of solid evidence, not out of a desire for glory or vindication. Proving the sasquatch hypothesis might just force a kindler, gentler humanity to emerge from that realization. It would remind us that the woods and the wilderness are not ours. We share the planet, not just with other critters that we hold dominion over and are free to evict, but also with a population of creatures that are frighteningly similar to ourselves. This gives us yet another reason to walk lightly on our fragile planet, but it also humbles us with the realization that we have paid so little attention to these creatures, whoever or what ever they are. They have existed right under our noses, all the while having so little impact on their habitat that we have not even noticed that they are there.

We're the out-of-towners. We've just arrived on this continent. There's a whole lot we could learn from "the locals."

Appendix

Using the Bigfoot Phenomenon to Teach the Scientific Method

By Thom Powell
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A Set of Science Lessons for Students in Grades 8-12

Purpose

The purposes of these lessons are:

1. To teach students the steps of the Scientific Method.

2. To give students a chance to apply the Scientific Method to a real unsolved scientific problem.

3. To entertain and distract students with some facts about the Bigfoot mystery while they assimilate the steps of the Scientific Method.

Level:

Late middle school or high school

Overview:

The Scientific Method is the most important intellectual tool of modern science, yet it is poorly understood by most students *and* adults. Every middle school or high school science curriculum includes a strand on the Scientific Method. The fact that this material is usually presented early in the school year, and with no particular follow-up, contributes to the lack of retention by students. The Scientific Method is also fairly dry material.

It is not easy to come up with an engaging way to teach the Scientific Method. Presenting a lesson on the Scientific Method in

the context of a presentation of the Bigfoot Phenomenon is an effective way of spicing up dry material. It also provides a source of humor that is revisited occasionally throughout the year.

For thousands of years in North America and parts of Asia, people in or near forested areas have claimed sightings of large animals that look somewhat like apes, and somewhat like a giant, hair-covered humans. They are variously known as Yeti, Bigfoot, Alma, Sasquatch, and Mountain Devil. Sometimes, tracks finds are also claimed. Whether these reports are accurate is the scientific challenge that is given to the students to try and resolve. Even if the myriad reports and claims are not credible, these reports do occur: people do sometimes claim to see bigfoot. Therefore, the "Bigfoot Phenomenon" does undeniably occur, even if it does not point to the existence of the actual animals.

A topic like bigfoot can evoke objections from either parents or school administrators. It is seen by some as inappropriate pseudo-science. The fact that it is controversial probably increases the potential interest among older middle school and high school students alike. These age groups favor forbidden, controversial, and rebellious ideas. The idea that there really may be big hairy monsters inhabiting the woods beyond human civilization is one such rebellious idea.

This phenomenon can be exploited as a vehicle for greatly improved student understanding of the scientific method. This gives the bigfoot phenomenon an undeniable value, even in the minds of skeptics.

It may be advisable to slant the presentation of the evidence in this lesson to favor the conclusion that bigfoot does NOT exist. This is done for two reasons.

1.) There is not time for an utterly thorough treatment of the entire body of accumulated evidence. Two days is about all that most teachers can afford to spend on matters that are not usually a part of the science curriculum. Two days can certainly be justified, as long as one keeps the emphasis upon the scientific method more than bigfoot evidence, per se.

2.) Bigfoot, evolution and other "hot button" topics are diluted for classroom use so as to minimize objections from complaint-prone parents or community members.

Despite this slant to the material, exposure to the topic will probably open the students' minds somewhat. In my experience, students will be prompted to view future developments concerning this topic with a more open mind.

Structuring the Lesson

The opening lesson introduces the steps of the scientific method in a very straight-ahead, lecture-and-note-taking format. Before that, try to develop some anticipation in the class by explaining that you have a genuine scientific mystery that you want the students to help try to solve.

Introduce the scientific method by showing the six steps on an overhead transparency. Ask the students to copy these steps into their science notebooks.

The Six Steps of the Scientific Method

1. Identify specific questions related to the problem at hand.
2. Propose an answer to one of these questions in the form of an educated guess.
3. Formulate a hypothesis; that is, state the educated guess in such a way that it can be tested.
4. Predict the outcome of the test in the event that the hypothesis is correct.
5. Test the hypothesis by analysis or experimentation to see if the hypothesis is correct.
6. Reject or revise the hypothesis if the prediction is wrong.

Additional Points About the Scientific Method:

There are some related concepts to explain to the students, wherein the gravity experiment can be used as an example:

- In practice the steps of the scientific method are not always followed in a distinct stepwise fashion. The separate steps may be integrated into a single avenue of inquiry, but the underlying concepts are always identifiable within that inquiry.
- The idea of applying the scientific method to a mystery may seem like a rigid and uncreative process. In reality the process of developing an investigation based on the method allows for, and often demands, very creative and unconventional thinking. The most creative aspect is the development of the hypothesis and the means to test it.
- The hypothesis, question or idea that is being investigated in an experiment is often derived from an intuitive sense of the subject being studied.
- It is important to explain to students that a hypothesis may be proven to be correct, but sometimes it is just as important to prove that a hypothesis is incorrect. One must remain willing to discard the hypothesis if experimental evidence refutes it.
- An experiment that invalidates a hypothesis is hardly unsuccessful. In fact, good scientists actively pursue evidence that refutes their own hypothesis. One way to do this is by constructing a "null hypothesis," as well as a working hypothesis, when designing the investigation. The null hypothesis is the opposite of the hypothesis. It is constructed so that if it is found to be true, the opposing hypothesis must be false. This approach encourages the scientist to avoid favoring one hypothesis when evaluating the results of an experiment. This is particularly necessary when the results being gathered are not completely objective.
- Results of one investigation do not confirm a hypothesis permanently. Even a successful experiment must be repeated, or replicated, to be certain that the original results are correct and verifiable. Replication of results is another critical component of the Scientific Method.

The trickiest concept to understand is the "null hypothesis." It is important to explain fully, because it is a key concept in the Bigfoot mystery exercise. A null hypothesis is purposely constructed to contradict the working hypothesis, and to be disproved by the investigation or experiment. By disproving the null hypothesis, a properly constructed hypothesis (the one which opposes the null hypothesis) is validated.

Dr. Jeff Glickman, a forensics expert in Hood River, Oregon, did a detailed analysis and investigation of the Patterson-Gimlin footage, and other matters related to the Bigfoot Phenomenon. The research paper he published about this investigation is a superb example of how the Scientific Method can be applied to a scientific mystery. Among other things, it shows how two opposing hypotheses are constructed to help investigate an unsolved problem.

Lesson 2: Presenting the Evidence

One or two periods will be needed to present and evaluate the evidence in class.

Begin by distributing the worksheets (1 per student) that will be used to write down the hypothesis and to record and rate the evidence categories you present to them.

There are the categories of evidence that could be presented:

- The Patterson-Gimlin Footage ("PGF" for short).
- Plaster footprint casts
- Eyewitness sighting reports
- Recorded sounds
- Native American legends / stories
- Other physical evidence such as hair
- Eyewitness sketches

The Patterson-Gimlin Footage

The best bit of publicized photographic evidence is the Patterson-Gimlin Footage (PGF). Taken by two bigfoot trackers in northern California in 1967, it is a very short piece of "super-8" home movie film.

On the BFRO website, a documentary can be purchased that examines footage in some detail. Here is a source:

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/6304544081/thebigfootfieldr/104-2985412-1894030

Glickman's research (previously mentioned) includes a superb forensic analysis of the PGF, though it is much too detailed and complex for anything but collegiate-level classroom use.

Track casts:

Nothing so characterizes the bigfoot phenomenon as a great big footprint cast in plaster. Tracks ARE occasionally found in wilderness areas and the rural fringe, and then cast in plaster for study.

Excellent treatments of track casts can be found on the BFRO website:

http://www.bfro.net/REF/THEORIES/MELD/jeffrsch.htm

http://www.bfro.net/REF/THEORIES/WHF/sasq_traits.htm

Two copies of genuine track casts can be bought through BFRO. The tracks were found in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. They are both over 16" long and make vivid visual aids for discussions of Bigfoot evidence. For details, querry:"Thom Powell" <tpowell@pps.k12.or.us> or Thom_Powell@BFRO.net

Cost is $40 each, and $20 to pack and ship either one or both.

Eyewitness Reports:

The Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO) website features a database of sighting reports continent-wide, grouped by state or province. Over 650 sighting reports are currently listed.

http://www.bfro.net/GDB/

When searching for sighting reports for classroom use, consider making printed copies of four or five accounts, preferably from the same state in which you reside. Some accounts are more detailed and vivid, and it is possible to find reports that include teenagers and younger eyewitnesses. Reproduce a class set of a few reports and assemble them into a booklet for student use.

Recorded Sounds:

Mysterious sounds are sometimes recorded in nocturnal forest environments. Some people attribute these sounds to bigfoot activity. The BFRO site has a few recordings that can be listened to on a multimedia computer.

WAV files of several calls taped can be downloaded to a home

computer and taped via the headphone jack for replay on cassette. Kids enjoy hearing these noises and speculating as to their origin.

http://www.bfro.net/REF/bfmedia.htm

Other Evidence:

In wildlife research, hair samples, skin cells, blood, feces, and other leavings are collectively known as "spoor." Alleged bigfoot hairs and feces are the most common type of spoor to be claimed. Other evidence that is sometimes attributed to bigfoots include broken trees, and damage done to livestock or certain types of damage to rural property.

All of this is difficult evidence to come by and even tougher to collect and save for classroom presentation. It is either invaluable or worthless, depending on whose opinion you seek. I have a dried feces sample (scat) that was collected in a very remote area in Oregon and is much too large to be bear scat. It contains much deer fur. I have shown this to classes as part of this lesson. It is a big hit with eighth graders, who love to be grossed out.

Native American Accounts and Legends:

There is information available on the BFRO website. Pacific Northwest tribes have a particularly deep body of legends dealing with Bigfoot, and "sasquatch" is the anglicized version of a Salish (coastal British Columbia tribe) word.

The Glickman research (mentioned previously with website address) is an excellent source of information relating to Native American sasquatch legends. He also does some detailed analysis of these legends in his research.

Other Media:

Other media, such as eyewitness sketches, still photos, etc. is available and listed on the BFRO website:

School districts usually have at least one video, film, or filmstrip available that deals with unexplained mysteries. I have previously used the filmstrip: "Unexplained Mysteries: The Abominable Snowman" which does a decent job of explaining the evidence, some famous accounts (Bosburg prints, PGF, etc.) and it presents the principle theories as to origins of this phenomenon. Another is the old "In Search Of..." episode hosted by Leonard Nimoy. Cable TV has

brought about a proliferation of more recent productions. The A&E production is the one recommended by BFRO (see "PGF," above).

Points to keep in mind when presenting evidence:
It is very important when presenting the evidence that the teacher remain as neutral as possible, even appropriately skeptical. I have found that the best means of maintaining this neutrality is through humor. There is too much humor potential here to ignore and by utilizing the humor, students get the clear message that the teacher is not trying to sell them on the idea that Bigfoot exists. This is critical. Bigfoot is a potentially controversial topic and a teacher who displays a bias, especially in favor of its existence, runs the risk of having to field parent objections.

On the other hand, it is probably better for a teacher who is presenting these lessons to err on the side of appearing overly skeptical when presenting the evidence portion of the lesson. There are a few reasons for this:

1. Kids are gullible, even high school kids. They could generally benefit from learning to be a bit more skeptical when assimilating information, whether it is from the television, newspapers, other kids, or grown-ups.

2. Skepticism is particularly important when evaluating claims of scientific breakthrough or discovery. Carl Sagan used to say, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof." With the persistent hoaxing that occurs in the Bigfoot realm, this is particularly true. Unfortunately it compels most folks to "throw out the baby with the bathwater" when considering bigfoot evidence, much to the dismay of the serious investigator. While presenting this material to students, I would NOT suggest a teacher try too hard to make inroads on this attitude. It will end up making you look like a "bigfoot believer" who lacks objectivity.
3. The evidence that supports the existence of Bigfoot is not really very good. If it were better, the idea of Bigfoots' existence would be more widely accepted than it is. While the total pile of evidence is really larger than most people realize, no one item is overly compelling. Footprints can be faked; people do sometimes exaggerate or lie about what they have seen, and ordinary things are often

misidentified. Films and video are not utterly reliable. The quality and duration of the few that may exist leaves much to be desired.

4. Remember: the principal goal of this set of lessons lesson is to teach application of the scientific method, rather than Bigfoot advocacy.

Presenting the Evidence:

When presenting the evidence to the students, I like to provide them with a pre-designed sheet that they can use to formulate their hypotheses, record and rate the evidence, then make their final pronouncement as to whether they accept or reject their working hypothesis.

I employ a simple format that allows them space to record two competing hypotheses at the top of the page, along with room for their name. The middle 2/3 of the sheet provides room to list the various categories of evidence that they must listen to and evaluate. There are large boxes for them to describe the evidence in a few words, and opposite each large box is a small box used to rate the evidence, using some scale of their own choosing, whether it is A through F, 1 through 10, or some other continuum.

At the bottom is a set of three check-off boxes: one for "accept working hypothesis and reject null hypothesis," one for "reject working and accept null hypothesis" and the last box for every scientist's preferred conclusion: "requires further study."

I ask students to complete all portions of the sheet I provide, but I make a point of not appearing to care which conclusion they reach. I do ask everybody to participate in a survey of class opinions. (Kids like to see how their opinions square with their classmates.) I am careful not to focus on individual opinions. I simply ask for a show of hands: how many thought the evidence supported Bigfoot's existence, how many thought it did not, and how many were undecided and thought that the matter needed further study.

I put the numbers on the board as I tally the show of hands. Since different kids may have worded their working and hypotheses and null hypotheses differently, I take care to be specific when asking for a show of hands, so that all the pro- and anti-bigfoot sentiments are correctly categorized.

Concluding and Summarizing the lesson:
As previously stated, kids enjoy seeing whether their opinion is the majority or the minority opinion. Still, I try to downplay the differences in interpretation of the evidence. I do this by stating that this is my favorite kind of educational problem for the following reason: No matter what your conclusion is, you are correct! This confuses students, and it is meant to. I pause and allow the confusion to sink in.

Then I explain, while pointing to each of the list of three possible conclusions and the tally of students who chose each as their conclusion.

1. No Bigfoot.
(In my experience, this is the way most students go.) If you said the evidence is weak and there is no bigfoot, then you are to be commended for correctly applying the Scientific Method. The evidence that supports bigfoot's existence is indeed weak and to conclude anything else is unscientific (in the strictest sense). Congratulations to you folks: you are correctly applying the Scientific Method.

2. Undecided. Requires further study.
If you said you did not know for sure, and that the matter required further study, you too were being prudent and careful, because we really do not know, and may never know if we do not keep an open mind and continue to investigate the matter.

3. Yes, there are bigfoots.
If you decided that the evidence was convincing, and you favor the idea that there really are bigfoots, then you are not being particularly scientific. Still, if I had money to bet, I would bet that this view will someday be proven to be correct.

I collect the papers and leave it at that.

Enrichment and topic of discussion/debate:
Consider asking the students to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson on the back of their paper, in an open ended way, or according to a few specific criteria that you, the teacher, suggest.

More attentive and thoughtful groups of students will rise to the

bait of the summary remark and ask for further explanation of the teacher position. I don't bother if they do not ask. (Remember: Don't push it.)

If they do, I might explain to the students that they were only shown a tiny fraction of the anecdotal and physical evidence that exists. Students were shown *one example* of each kind of evidence that exists. There is much more of each kind. There is a veritable mountain of anecdotal (eyewitness) accounts that has been gathered. None of it, alone, is considered scientifically reliable.

Statistics:

All of the evidence, together, is difficult to ignore, especially to those versed in statistics. The statistical likelihood that ALL eye-witness accounts are either mistaken or lies is impossibly remote, even though this is exactly what "science" must assume, when more empirical data is lacking.

Should even ONE witness be correct in describing a bigfoot sighting, then there must be a bigfoot. Further, it seems impossible that there could be a total population of only one. There must be more than one or they could not reproduce, in which case they would be extinct by now.